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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

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**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 16 February 2016

Mardi 16 février 2016



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 16 February 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 16 février 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Welcome back. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WASTE-FREE ONTARIO ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS DÉCHETS

Mr. Murray moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to enact the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016 and the Waste Diversion Transition Act, 2016 and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / *Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant la Loi de 2016 sur la récupération des ressources et l'économie circulaire et la Loi transitoire de 2016 sur le réacheminement des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.*

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member from Mississauga–Brampton South, who I'm sure will be joining us shortly.

Before I get started, I want to welcome all members back to the House. It's nice to see our colleagues. I hope you had a lovely Christmas and seasonal holidays, and had some time and rest with the families and loved ones we spend too little time with. So welcome back to all my colleagues, and happy new year.

Mr. Speaker, today I'm pleased to move second reading of the proposed legislation that would support Ontario's effort to keep valuable resources—in our landfill. Of course, this bill is also intended as part of our climate change strategy, as it makes a very important contribution to that effort from the Ministry of the Environment.

Bill 151, known as the Waste-Free Ontario Act, is part of a bold plan to transform how we manage waste. If passed, the proposed legislation will make producers fully responsible for resource recovery and the reduction of waste associated with their product, which is quite a shift from the way we currently manage it.

Our approach is outcomes-focused rather than prescriptive. The bill would provide producers with the flexibility to manage waste in the most cost-efficient and effective manner. It would encourage innovation, lower recycling costs and allow for greater consumer participation through convenient recycling options.

Shifting the costs associated with recovering end-of-life products and packaging from municipal taxpayers to producers would also save money for municipalities and improve the sustainability of municipal waste systems. If passed, this legislation would help us reach our greenhouse gas reduction targets and achieve goals in our climate change strategy. It would boost the Ontario economy and create jobs, while saving taxpayers money. I think those are three things that all members of this House would agree are good things to be doing.

I'd like to start with the circular economy. I know that the member for Huron–Bruce and the member for Toronto–Danforth joined our delegation to COP21 in Paris, and I think that many of them will remember being in front of the Paris city hall and how often we saw the concept of a circular economy, which is a foundational policy right now in countries like France, Britain and the Netherlands.

It really is a cradle-to-cradle approach, developing a sustainable economic system where valuable resources previously sent to the landfill are reintroduced to the economy, which is the opposite of what we have right now, which is a linear economy that is really based on the idea that you produce something and eventually it becomes garbage. We often say that most of our products, sadly, are designed for the dump, as end of life. A circular economy changes that. It drives innovation; it encourages businesses to design long-lasting, reusable and easily recyclable products, which they are more likely to do when they are responsible for the end of life of those products. It provides an incentive to design innovative ways of turning what is considered waste into a resource, while changing consumer behaviour.

The spinoff of a circular economy will cross all sectors of Ontario's economy. In some ways, this is first and foremost an economic bill, because its biggest impact will shift us from an economy in which we waste resources and add cost, to one in which we recover resources and improve productivity. I'd like to give you two examples, Mr. Speaker, if I can pause for a moment.

Right now, we make aluminum, one of the most carbon-intensive and polluting products that we make. We source bauxite in Jamaica and ship it to Canada; we mine alum, and we transport it. It is one of the most intensive forms of producing materials. In Quebec and Ontario, we have three steel smelters and we have one aluminum smelter. We have enough aluminum in our waste and recycling stream and enough steel to be able to run those plants. As a matter of fact, in Ontario we have

three steel plants right now that run entirely—entirely—on recovered steel.

If we ran the Alcan aluminum smelter on recovered aluminum, we would cut the energy—I just want to put this on the record; this gives you an idea of how dramatic the impacts of this legislation would be. We have enough aluminum in Quebec and Ontario to supply our regional aluminum smelter with enough aluminum that we would never have to mine it. It would cut the amount of energy required to make aluminum for the auto sector and our beverage industry by 95%. So when you see major industrial sites being able to reduce their energy costs and their energy use 95%, you get a sense of how dramatic this shift would be.

Beyond the shifting in resources—a less-energy, lower-carbon economy—there are other ways in which this bill will actually help us reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Ontario's Climate Change Strategy, which calls for a resource and waste reduction framework to assist Ontario's shift to a circular economy, will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In Ontario, absolute greenhouse gas emissions from waste increased by 25% between 1990 and 2012. In 2013, the Ontario waste sector was responsible for nine megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, 5% of the provincial total; 93% of those emissions came from waste sent to landfills. Most came from organic waste.

What is more, every year in Canada, about \$1 billion worth of recoverable materials are sent to landfills.

Products made from recycled materials, as I said, require less energy, have fewer greenhouse gas emissions and reduce the demand for raw materials. Equally importantly, waste prevention and resource recovery will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions from landfill, and mean that fewer emissions are generated at various stages of production.

0910

There are also some rather remarkable direct economic benefits, because a less wasteful economy is a more productive economy and provides significant benefit to Ontario and to many sectors and industries. This bill would shift the cost of recycling to producers, who would have flexibility and efficient, innovative ways to reduce waste. This bill is likely to save the municipal taxpayers of Ontario \$115 million as we shift the financial burden away from municipalities that have no real way to manage the end use of the products that they collect. They often end up in landfills or recycling and they're dependent on the vagaries of the market.

But by shifting to making the producers who own the plants, who own the manufacturing process—it is much easier for them to reintroduce those materials at the end of the life of the product back into the front end of the manufacturing process. This is a rather remarkable shift, and in the process of doing that, about \$115 million comes off the municipal tax base, which will help municipalities. That money can be better invested or saved by municipal governments.

Businesses that collect, process, broker and recover waste materials, as well as companies that manufacture them and distribute products made with recovered materials, stand to benefit from expanding markets. Through procurement policies and other things that we're doing, we will be looking at opening up more market demand for recovered materials.

Studies across Canada and around the world have shown that Ontario's existing waste diversion programs can create up to 10 times more jobs than waste disposal. While waste disposal is not a labour-intensive activity, recycling and resource recovery is labour intensive; it requires a lot of people and it creates good-paying jobs.

One study indicates that diversion of organic waste creates 60% more GDP than disposing of those wastes. It is estimated that for every thousand tonnes of waste diverted in Ontario, seven jobs are created via the Blue Box Program and Ontario's diversion programs.

Members of this House should be very proud. We were the first jurisdiction in the world to introduce the now ubiquitous Blue Box Program. It was done under the leadership of my friend the Honourable James Bradley, the member for St. Catharines. That was in the 1980s. Minister Bradley and I talked about the fact that this is probably the largest, most expansive bill and change to waste-related resource recovery legislation right now—and competing right now. We're not the first, because the Netherlands and some other countries have done this, but this is probably the biggest expansion, investment and shift in the way we approach this since the 1980s, when my friend from St. Catharines stood in this ministry.

Recovering just 60% of waste materials could create 13,000 jobs in Ontario and contribute \$1.5 billion to Ontario's GDP. That's a very, very significant shift, and it's important that the investments we're making in public utilities and public services are resulting in rates of return on investment and in greater rates of job creation.

In addition to creating jobs, increasing waste diversion rates and improving resource recovery will help Ontario businesses stay competitive in the global economy because it's more resource-productive. We have often seen some of the great work done by Sustainable Prosperity in Ottawa showing that we have a problem in Canada, across this country from sea to sea, with productivity, and mostly "natural capital productivity," which is a big term for how efficiently we use resources in the economy. Our gap with the United States is about 25%. If we close that productivity gap, to which natural capital productivity is one of the largest contributors, the average Canadian family would have about \$7,000 more disposable income.

These things really do deal in very, very specific ways with our competitiveness, with our rates of job creation and with the disposable income of Canadians. Sadly, as Canadians—maybe because of the bounty of our resources—compared to other OECD countries, we have been much less productive in our natural capital. This bill will move us from the back of the pack to the front of the pack, certainly in legislation.

I also want to thank the many, many stakeholders over the years. This is the third time some form or attempt has been made in the last decade to fix and to improve our waste collection. I'd like to thank many people in the corporate community. Unilever Canada is a zero-waste company and a very large employer in Ontario that makes many of the household products that most of us are familiar with and pick up at our local stores. Their company's vice-president and general counsel, John Coyne, recognized that Bill 151 focuses more on outcomes than process and is essential to growing Ontario's recycling programs and encouraging all producers to continue investing in product and packaging innovation.

One of the things that's been quite remarkable, whether it's been Unilever or Loblaw's, is that a lot of the retail and producer sector has stood with us on this and has worked hand in glove with us over the last year and with the ministry to develop something that will work for consumers and work for our citizens, and really allows them the tools to take responsibility—because Unilever knows it can reduce costs if it has more control over what happens to its project.

Obviously, all of us know that one of the largest areas that fills the waste stream and the recycling stream is the products from the beverages that we all consume and drink. A lot of those are disposable as well. As we move to make more durable products, we know we have some challenges there.

I want to thank the Canadian Beverage Association. They represent more than 60 brands of non-alcoholic beverages. They employ over 20,000 Canadians, and Jim Goetz, president of the association, calls the proposed legislation a positive step in waste reduction. He sees the government's approach to empower producers with more responsibility and flexibility as allowing the non-alcoholic beverage industry to implement initiatives that increase recycling, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and further develop a circular economy in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank some of the other folks who have worked on this: the Ontario Waste Management Association, which represents more than 300 private sector companies, public sector municipalities, and others involved in the waste management sector. Rob Cook, the association's CEO, says the proposed legislation is an important step forward for the province. He has also said that it moves "towards a circular economy, which will improve resource efficiency, reduce our environmental footprint, increase productivity, create local jobs and foster economic growth." I want to thank them for their work.

Environmental organizations such as Environmental Defence and the Toronto Environmental Alliance also welcome Bill 151. These organizations recognize that the government's strategy marks the beginning of a new approach to waste in Ontario. In particular, they commend Ontario for making the explicit link between waste and climate change and committing to a vision for a circular economy where Ontario produces zero waste.

This proposed legislation would help us divert more waste from landfills, and it would increase accountability

for those who produce waste and have the greatest ability to influence the design of packaging.

The origins of the current system we have go back to 2002. As some of you know and as some of you tease me about from time to time, I was mayor of the capital city of the province to our immediate west. When Premier Wynne asked me to take this cabinet post on, she was very clear that she had thought we had tried many things in the last couple of decades around waste and a lot of them hadn't worked. I'm not taking partisan shots here, but I think it would be safe to say that while they were all well-intentioned initiatives, they left us with a very complicated system of numerous stewardship organizations. When I actually looked at the array of market management organizations and oversight organizations, I have to say, it seemed pretty excessive. When Premier Wynne took over, she said, "Can you find a way forward that simplifies this?" Having worked in other systems and having done consulting in my life in other municipalities—I'm not sure what the thinking was 10, 15 or 20 years ago when these things were introduced, but it seemed to invite a level of complexity that would defy accountability.

One of the things that was personally very important to me in the last year, because you can imagine that this has consumed a lot of my time as minister in the last 12 months, and that of my political staff—I want to thank Colin O'Meara and my team, and my colleague from Mississauga—Brampton South who's been a great partner in this—was sorting through this, because when you have a system that's so complicated, where you have organizations run by industry with very little accountability, you can imagine that changing a system that's that embedded, that involves municipalities and has complex relationships is hard.

0920

I want to thank the Association of Municipalities of Ontario for their work and their leadership, and those same industries, because this is a dramatic level of change: The IFOs are gone, the multi-layers of organizations are gone, the market is restored, and the lines of accountability to Ontarians publicly, as well as reduced cost, are very clearly drawn in this.

I will be happy—and I hope this bill gets speedy passage because it cleans up what I think has been the better part of a quarter of a century of different types of experiments with complex models of service delivery that, while well intentioned, didn't deliver the kind of clarity and results and accountability, we think. I want to thank Premier Wynne for her support in allowing this bill to come forward so quickly. You can imagine turning this around in one year is quite the task.

If you compare it to some of the other proposed legislation—Bill 91, bills introduced in previous Legislatures over the years to try and fix this, ones that never passed—you'll see that this is a much more dramatic shift and a fundamental shift, because I think even the attempts of the last several years were not as stringent or as complete. This is a much more comprehensive, funda-

mental change in the principles and in the accountability that goes with it. It should be very clear to everyone—whether you're a producer, a consumer, a municipality, a provincial minister, my colleagues from the Legislature—who is responsible for what piece of this; who is responsible for managing the money and the transactions; who is responsible for the outcome; who is responsible for ensuring that the most cost-effective delivery system is in place. Our diversion rates, Mr. Speaker, went up in the 1980s, when my colleague from St. Catharines introduced the Blue Box Program, and have really struggled to get improvements beyond that in the last few years. This will start to see greater ambition. This will put us into a system where we will see a much more significant increase in our diversion rates, moving us ahead.

It's also interesting that some of the most successful resource companies right now—our three steel mills, the companies that are working on resource recovery and energy recovery—have cut their costs and have increased their productivity, driving more outputs with fewer inputs. When you're making steel from old cars and old materials, or you're making aluminum from aluminum cans and not merging that, the input costs are so much lower. It's less energy; it is less resources. You've removed all of the costs associated with landfill—because when an aluminum can goes into a landfill, it sits there. Right now, when we talk about energy, if you took all of the aluminum cans that do not end up in recycling but just end up in landfills alone, there's enough embedded energy in those cans to run the Pickering nuclear plant for 59 days. That's how much energy we lose—never mind the aluminum. That's just the energy that we've lost by turning a perfectly usable material. Aluminum, steel, many of these materials can be reprocessed in perpetuity. The resource is never exhausted. They do not degrade. This concept of a circular economy starts to link us up with other progressive countries and other progressive jurisdictions that do that.

The other piece that we need to do some more work on—I think it's just one in my last few minutes I want to address before I turn it over to my colleague, who will have the last half-hour: We're struggling with climate change right now. You've often heard me say in this House, when people ask me when I'm out across Ontario, "What's your biggest concern about climate change?" I've said that it's really food and water security. You look at the droughts in California, you look at the droughts in Syria; the collapse of food production in the Fertile Crescent, the most important food source in the Middle East. In California, where 90% of our tomatoes and 74% of our lettuce comes from, they're projected, according to NASA, after the most severe droughts they've ever experienced, to be in a 40-year drought, which is as far as NASA projects. We saw fires in the Prairies that had air quality warnings in Regina and Saskatoon; pine needles impacting on our forestry sector, destroying millions of acres of woodlot; and the droughts that are causing fires that are taking out many of our natural resources—both agricultural land and fires on the Prairies as well as that.

The other piece with climate change is that every one degree Celsius that the temperature changes—Ontario will be more severely hit than other places; the southern part of Ontario over the next 30 years will increase by four degrees Celsius and the northern part, where my friend Minister Gravelle comes from, Thunder Bay, will see an eight-degrees-Celsius change. We didn't do anything about that. If you can imagine, Thunder Bay eight degrees warmer—having been the mayor of that other colder city down the highway, that may come as good news to some folks. But the problem is that the devastating impact it will have on the boreal forest and on people's livelihood, and on many of the industries that people in Thunder Bay live on, makes the downside a lot worse than the upside.

If you appreciate that, according to NOAA, one degree Celsius is a 7% increase in the amount of water that is absorbed into the atmosphere, dramatically changing precipitation regionally, the snow patterns and precipitation patterns in southwestern Ontario, in our food belt, or in the forestry belt in northern Ontario are going to be devastated; just the impact of that much water on trees that are not used to absorbing it, on wetlands, on the ecosystems from which many people get their livelihood—and we all depend on those forestry products and that food. We have winter roads now, Mr. Speaker, that are up for only six days a year.

The reason I was talking about food and those products and waste is because we on this planet, especially in countries like this, throw out 40% of all our food; 40% ends up in the garbage. During climate change, we'll lose about one third of our food production. That could be offset if we were just better at managing our food resource. We import \$4 billion worth of food into Ontario every year that we could grow here. Farmers are arguably some of the most important people, if not the most important people, going forward in the next few decades as we confront climate change, because they will be farming in more hostile environments than they ever have before, and our food security, because of many of the places we get our food, will be impacted by drought.

When you realize that about nine megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions come from organic waste, that's a lot—we're trying to reduce by about 19 megatonnes. If we can keep that material from degrading in landfills and not allow it to emit carbon, this is one of the most significant contributions, outside of the transportation and building areas, that we can make, and at the same time, we are also saving a lot of food. It's interesting that in Paris, France, they just introduced laws that don't allow food to be thrown out by retailers, which is an interesting new twist on things. While we're not going that far, I think this is a much more positive and voluntary incentive for people to do that.

It really is a lot of us just thinking about how much resources we use, Mr. Speaker—because we use the equivalent of about nine planets. That's how much resources our generation is using. If we continue to use nine planets' worth of resources, we won't be long for

this Earth, because we only have one planet. These things are connected: our climate change efforts, our environmental footprint and the amount of resources we consume. Canadians throw out more garbage than any other society in the world: 777 kilograms of garbage a year. If you can imagine a stack of garbage nearly a tonne large, that's a lot. We can live within the norms of other modern Western economies. We certainly should be able to get to the average, which means that we would cut our waste stream by about half. If we could all quickly get down to only throwing out 300 or 400 kilograms, that would be it. Our ambitions—even if they are in the middle of the pack in mediocrity—would be an improvement of about 100% if we could just get down to the world norm.

I am very proud to be associated with this bill. I think it's one of the most important pieces of legislation, both as an economic bill and in the 13,000 jobs it will create directly. The indirect benefits, as we move to a more efficient economy, making us more competitive globally: removing so much of the material that is out there in landfills, rotting away, emitting greenhouse gases; repurposing our economy to a higher-productivity economy, taking about \$110 million or \$120 million off the municipal tax bill, improving efficiency; and—really rewarding—breaking up what is a system that was incredibly complicated and defied the kind of accountability that we would like to see. This is a bold new direction that we're going in. It's very different than other attempts to reform the system.

0930

Mr. Speaker, I will turn it over to the member of provincial Parliament for Mississauga–Brampton South. In turning it over to my colleague Ms. Amrit Mangat, I want to thank her, because she has one of the tough jobs. She works with all of you to make sure that your voices and fingerprints are on this legislation, and on getting it through the House. I want to thank her personally for the great work she did on the Great Lakes bill. I think many of you had some good conversations about that. I look forward to her leadership and her stewardship here in the Legislature as we move this through.

It's a great pleasure, Mr. Speaker, again. To my colleagues: Welcome back. Happy new year. I hope you had a lovely time with your families. We often take the folks in our lives for granted until they're not there. God bless and keep you all safe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Continuing with debate, I turn it over to the member from Mississauga–Brampton South.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm very pleased to rise today and speak in support of the motion put forward by the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change for the second reading of the Waste-Free Ontario Act. He is a minister who is very dedicated, very engaged and very passionate about fighting climate change and creating jobs.

Bill 151, if passed, would recover resources, reduce waste, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, fight climate change and, as our minister said in his speech, it would also establish a circular economy.

I would like to expand on the overview of Bill 151. If this proposed legislation is passed, it would enact two acts (1) reducing waste, and (2) replacing existing programs operated under the Waste Diversion Act, 2002. And if this proposed legislation is passed, producers will be accountable in full for recovering resources and reducing waste associated with their products and packaging.

This legislation would also create a new oversight body known as the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority to oversee the implementation of the new producer responsibility model. This authority will be equipped with new powers, new compliance and enforcement tools, and with enhanced oversight and accountability.

This proposed act would also enable our government to issue policy statements to support that interest. It would require ministries, municipalities, producers and others to perform in a manner that is consistent with those policies. The second act would ensure that existing waste diversion programs can be smoothly transitioned to a new producer responsibility model.

Now, the question arises: Why is there a need for such legislation? Why is it important? Ontario's recycling programs have been recognized internationally. Almost all Ontarians—97% of our households—have access to the Blue Box Program. In the residential sector, 47% of household waste is diverted from landfills, but the rate for the rest of the economy is much, much lower. Existing waste diversion programs cover only 15% of Ontario's waste stream, and over the last decade, our overall waste diversion rate has stalled at 25%. As a result, more than 12 million tonnes of waste is generated annually in Ontario, and every year, approximately \$1 billion worth of recoverable materials is lost to landfills across Canada, so it's very clear that more needs to be done. That is why Bill 151 is very, very important. It is intended to enable a shift to a circular economy which would increase resource recovery and waste reduction in Ontario.

In this proposed legislation, the new model, as I said earlier, would have a producer responsibility framework. That would make producers environmentally accountable and financially responsible for their products and packaging at end of life. The province would establish requirements that producers must meet to achieve desired outcomes for designated products and packaging. These requirements would apply to responsible producers and create a more level playing field. Requirements would be set out in regulation and producers would be able to decide how best to meet them.

We want all Ontarians to have reliable, accessible and convenient services like the blue box and other waste diversion programs. To provide this access, the government would have the ability to set consumer convenience and accessibility standards. The proposed legislation would support increased consumer participation. This

could include geographically based standards to ensure services are provided across the province. The province could also require producers to develop promotion and education programs to support consumer awareness.

In this proposed legislation, we will have a strategy to implement our broader approach, which is set out in our Draft Strategy for a Waste Free Ontario: Building the Circular Economy. That draft strategy would be a road map to help Ontario to leverage planning, policy and economic tools to reduce the amount of waste generated in Ontario, improve resource recovery and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the waste sector.

Together, the proposed legislation and strategy would boost recycling in the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors. They would further foster innovation in product and packaging design, and they would incent companies to look for ways to make their recycling processes more economical and stay competitive. They would allow full producer responsibility for the Blue Box Program and remove the financial burden on municipal property taxpayers. Under the strategy, a plan would be developed to reduce the amount of organic materials going into landfills.

This proposed legislation would have a huge consumer impact also. How it would benefit Ontario households: Under Ontario's proposed approach, consumers would continue to have convenient access to recycling through the blue box. In fact, we expect the public will be able to recycle more material than they can today because producers would be required to meet collection standards for more materials, and the proposed legislation would make producers responsible for providing customers with clear information about how to manage their end-of-life products, including drop-off sites. In a more general way, Ontario households would benefit from the proposed legislation because our approach will be good for the environment and the economy.

There will also be huge economic benefits if Bill 151 is passed. It would boost the economy by recovering more resources from more waste materials and create jobs in the waste diversion sector. Our government's proposed approach would provide a range of tools to ensure valuable resources are recovered, reused and reintegrated into Ontario's economy, which our minister said in his speech would be known as a circular economy.

0940

In fact, according to the Conference Board of Canada's recent report, recovering just 60% of waste materials could create 13,000 jobs and contribute \$1.5 billion in gross domestic product in Ontario. Recovering resources from waste can create seven jobs for every 1,000 tonnes of waste captured, and it will generate 10 times more jobs than if that waste were sent to landfills.

If passed, this proposed legislation would provide producers with the flexibility to manage waste in the most cost-efficient and cost-effective manner.

Since shifting costs of recovering products and packaging from municipal taxpayers to producers would also help municipalities, and municipalities could save more

than \$100 million annually, this will further improve the sustainability of municipal services.

There are huge environmental benefits as well. The proposed Waste-Free Ontario Act would help us reach our greenhouse gas reduction targets and achieve the goals in our climate change strategy. Landfills have an environmental as well as an economic cost. When organic waste and other biodegradable materials, such as paper, are disposed of in landfills, they begin to break down. This creates emissions such as methane, which has a global warming potential 25 times greater than that of carbon dioxide.

Greenhouse gas emissions from Ontario's waste increased by 25% between 1990 and 2012 as the waste in Ontario landfills has increased. In fact, emissions from the waste sector, including the release of methane from landfills, accounted for 5% of total emissions in Ontario in 2013. Ontario currently avoids adding 2.2 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions to our air every year through our waste diversion programs. This is equivalent to taking almost half a million cars off the road each year.

Recycling uses less energy and produces fewer greenhouse gas emissions than creating products with virgin materials. It also avoids the environmental impact of activities such as the extraction of raw materials.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, there will be benefits for the municipalities also. Since the cost is shifting to the producer from municipal taxpayers, it would save money for municipalities and improve the sustainability of municipal services. Municipalities would realize additional savings as more materials are designated for the new producer-responsibility approach; for example, fluorescent bulbs and tubes etc.

Bill 151 would also set a clear process for addressing disputes. The proposed legislation requires dispute resolution provisions to be included in contracts between producers and other parties, such as municipalities, in order to address disputes related to services and compensation.

Mr. Speaker, there will be a transition from the proposed legislation, if it is passed—to replace all the existing programs. The proposed act was developed in response to what we heard from across Ontario. One thing we heard very loud and clear was that we needed to ensure a smooth and orderly transition of the existing programs to ensure no interruption of current services to Ontarians.

The Waste Diversion Transition Act, under Bill 151, would facilitate the smooth transition of existing waste diversion programs to a new producer-responsibility approach. The transition process would be based on four principles:

- (1) Government would lead the overall transition process;

- (2) Each program would have a customized transition process;

- (3) Extensive stakeholder consultations would be conducted; and

(4) Finally, Ontario's experience with and access to services such as the Blue Box Program will never be negatively impacted.

To ensure a smooth and orderly transition, Bill 151 would allow the existing waste diversion programs to continue until they are transitioned into new ones. Specifically, Bill 151 would set clear rules and responsibilities, and the process for transition. The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change would provide clear direction on how the transition would be undertaken.

Working with stakeholders, each industry funding organization would develop and implement a wind-up plan for its own program and itself. The new Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority would approve and oversee the implementation of the windup plans, to ensure that the minister's direction is followed and to mitigate the risks of any interruption in services.

If Bill 151 is passed, we will be also working extensively with all relevant parties—including the existing industry funding organizations, producers, municipalities, waste management providers and the public—on how to make this transition as seamless and as efficient as possible, without disruption to program services or funding.

The Draft Strategy for a Waste Free Ontario: Building the Circular Economy would provide a road map for transitioning to the existing programs. If the proposed legislation is passed, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change anticipates that the transition of the municipal hazardous or special waste program, waste electrical and electronic equipment program, and Used Tires Program could be complete within two to four years. However, the transition of the Blue Box Program may take longer, as government, municipalities and producers would need to discuss the transition process extensively to ensure that residents continue to receive convenient and accessible collection services.

Now I would like to talk about the transition of the Blue Box Program, and its transition under the proposed legislation. As I said earlier, Ontario is recognized internationally for our recycling programs. The blue box system is a key contributor for reducing waste in Ontario while providing households with a convenient way to recycle their printed paper and packaging. A remarkable 97% of households in the province have convenient access to these programs.

This legislation, if passed, would ensure that everyone—whether in southern Ontario, or in northern Ontario, in urban and rural areas—would have the same level of convenient access to the blue box services that they have today. The proposed new oversight body, the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority, would be responsible for enforcing these service standards. I want to assure all members that the government would only transition the Blue Box Program to the new producer responsibility framework when producers are fully ready to deliver blue box services based on standards set by the government.

0950

I would also like to touch on organic waste diversion. As I said earlier, our strategy includes a plan to increase the diversion of organic waste. Organic waste such as food, leaves and yard waste makes up about one third of Ontario's waste stream. Much of this material still ends up in landfills. Keeping organic waste out of landfills ensures valuable nutrients are recovered, and it will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Addressing organic waste will require coordination among multiple players, including households, waste-service providers, restaurants, food manufacturers, retailers and food distributors. That is why our draft strategy makes it clear that the development of our organic action plan would be steered by a stakeholder working group to coordinate efforts and identify the best tools to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I have talked about how the proposed legislation and strategy would address the Blue Box Program and organic waste. Now I would like to turn to industrial, commercial and institutional waste.

As I noted earlier, Ontario's current overall waste diversion rate is about 25%, but for the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors, the rate is only 13%. The proposed legislation and draft strategy would provide a number of tools to increase diversion in these sectors. More materials would be designated under the new producer-responsibility approach. We would require more waste generated in industrial facilities, commercial establishments and institutional buildings to be diverted. Our organic action plan and disposal bans would also assist with diverting more waste from those sectors.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize some companies' extensive effort in increasing diversion. Our draft strategy seeks to develop markets for materials and support behaviours that reduce waste materials before they are generated.

As I was talking about industrial, commercial and institutional waste—last year I had the opportunity to visit a school. Some institutions are doing it on their own. It is an elementary school, and the name of the school is St. John Bosco School. The students collected 730 kilograms of batteries, more than any other school in the province, because they strongly believe that recycling batteries protects our natural environment. I would like to congratulate all the students of St. John Bosco elementary school for doing such great work, who were doing it with the help of an NGO, Earth Rangers.

Mr. Speaker, in preparing the proposed legislation, Ontario looked to other jurisdictions—we didn't do it in a vacuum—which have started to move toward a circular economy already. They are implementing producer-responsibility approaches and other targeted measures to manage waste. We found that those jurisdictions that measure and invest in the effective use of their resources not only reduce waste but also improve their economic output.

For example, Quebec's residual materials management policy sets out actions, timelines and targets related to waste diversion in the residential, industrial, commercial and institutional sectors. Their approach includes pro-

ducer responsibility, landfill bans and a landfill levy to fund waste diversion initiatives and new infrastructure.

British Columbia has implemented producer-responsibility approaches for a number of types of waste, including a program for residential packaging and printed paper. Disposal bans have also been used at the provincial level in British Columbia for beverage containers and at the regional level for a number of additional materials, including organic waste, in metro Vancouver and Nanaimo.

California has set a goal of 75% recycling, composting or reduction by 2020. The state has implemented a range of initiatives to achieve that goal: Producer responsibility—again, the same model, voluntary and government-run programs, as well as retail take-back programs, are in place, supported by source separation requirements and landfill bans.

In Europe, Austria and the Netherlands have achieved or exceeded recycling targets by implementing a range of policy tools to increase resource recovery. These include producer responsibility, which we're going to adopt if this legislation is passed, disposal bans and voluntary agreements. Germany has achieved a 40% increase in resource productivity since 2000 and reduced its domestic material consumption. Producer responsibility is applied by almost all those jurisdictions to a number of waste materials, such as packaging and household hazardous waste.

Ontario's proposed legislation and our strategy for a waste-free Ontario build on the experience of these and other jurisdictions. We are looking to what all those jurisdictions have done and how we can adopt those programs.

As I said earlier, Bill 151 will not only be good for our environment; it will also recover resources and reduce waste, while also supporting our climate change strategy and helping us reduce greenhouse gas emissions—as well as creating jobs in that sector.

I don't see any downside to this bill; it's a win-win situation. I'm very pleased to support this bill, which is good for the economy, good for everything. It would boost the economy and create conditions to recover more waste materials and create more jobs. I encourage all members of this House to swiftly get this bill passed so that all the players in the industry can benefit from it. I will be very pleased to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: That was almost an hour that we heard from the government on the new Bill 151. This kind of replaces Bill 91, if you recall. That was from a previous Parliament. It ended up in the recycling bin because it was such a bad piece of legislation. Thankfully, in this piece of legislation, they have incorporated some of the suggestions that our critic at the time, Michael Harris, made when we debated Bill 91.

I want to talk about the record of the government when it comes to waste diversion. It is a hugely important subject in our economies and in our province today to

deal with the waste, because we produce vast amounts of waste, I believe, sometimes, unnecessarily. Nevertheless, we still have to deal with it.

1000

I remember, when this government came to power in 2003—yes, 2003—they promised that they would have a waste diversion rate of 60% by 2008. They brought in an act in 2004, promising a waste diversion rate of 60% by 2008. It was 25% when they came into power. In 2008, it had not improved. They have a record of failing repeatedly when it comes to the issue of waste diversion.

We're largely in support of this act. We're going to be looking for some changes—our environment critic will be speaking to it shortly as well. But this can't be just another one of these Liberal publicity stunts, where, at the end of the day, they end up bringing in an act that fails again, like their Bill 91, which never even saw the light of day, because even they themselves realized that it was not going to be successful.

So I hope that they've figured this one out and we can act on waste diversion in a way that truly, truly reduces the amount of waste we are turning to our landfills in this province, because it's something we must do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I want to welcome everybody back from—I won't say a break, because it was a recess from the Legislature. I'm sure everybody was busy back in their ridings. I don't want the public thinking that, during a recess here, we are not working back in our ridings.

It's my pleasure to join in the conversation about Bill 151, the Waste-Free Ontario Act, or—the long-form title—An Act to enact the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2015 and the Waste Diversion Transition Act, 2015 and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002.

There's been a lot said about waste management, and I think that we could all do our part to do a better job of waste management as far as recycling and that sort of thing. I'm reading through some of the notes here, and what jumps out at me is that, although it states that the producers of these products would be responsible for the cost of reclaiming the materials they used, such as packaging, municipalities would act as a service provider to producers to help them fulfill their obligation under the act. The fact that there are no details yet as to how municipalities are supposed to do that, that it's going to be rolled out throughout the regulations—we don't have a lot of information on that, and that's concerning to me, specifically in my riding, where we face a lot of economic challenges. We certainly don't want any surprise expenses to municipalities while they're trying to enforce or facilitate producers of these materials in recovering material.

It will be interesting, as the debate progresses, to see how these issues are going to be addressed and how municipalities are actually going to be affected by this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now recognize the member from Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It's certainly a great pleasure to speak today on Bill 151, the Waste-Free Ontario Act, 2015.

Ontario's leadership in creating a circular economy is nothing short of inspiring, as is the work of the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. I would like to thank the minister for noting the international and national implications of climate change and some of the impressive achievements from around the globe.

A circular economy where nothing is wasted is critical to not only Ontario's future but also Canada's future. Just the other week, I had the privilege to tour the recycling facilities at the Kingston Area Recycling Centre, led by Derek Ochej and Heather Roberts. Each one of our municipalities keeps track of our recycling rates. For example, 92% of Kingstonians are using their blue and grey bins, but only 50% are using their organic waste bins.

As the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change has mentioned, there is an entire economy that is created through recycling. Consider, for example, plastic juice containers, which are purchased from our recycling facilities at between \$400 and \$700 per tonne, as opposed to cardboard juice containers, which garner around \$90 per tonne.

The recycling economy is very relevant to our municipalities across the province, but it also needs to become more relevant to each and every one of us as we make individual purchasing decisions. Considering that waste management contributes \$2.1 billion to Ontario's GDP, and every 1,000 tonnes of diverted waste from landfill generates seven full-time jobs, Ontario is on the right track.

It is my greatest hope that each and every member of this House will support this very important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: Good morning, everyone. It's a pleasure for me to speak for just a couple of minutes on Bill 151. As most people have noted, it's a very substantial act, and I want to thank the ministry for including some of the suggestions that our party and others in the province made on the previous bill, Bill 91.

Any time I talk about this subject, I have to think back to the days when I was involved in municipal politics. Back when I was a local mayor and we started the blue box recycling program in our community in the late 1980s, there was a lot of pride in the fact that we were doing something very positive. Back then, we promoted the three Rs: reduce, reuse and recycle. We did a great job in making sure that people were aware of the benefits of recycling, but I don't think over those years we did our due diligence with the other two—and our critic the member for Huron–Bruce reminded me about recovery as well.

One of the things that I would like to impart on the debate is the fact that we should, as parties, put a lot of effort into educating the community. There are still a lot

of people, especially in some of our rural pockets in the province, who still haven't understood the importance of participating in these programs. Some of their municipal councils need some guidance and some assistance in how best to attack the importance of what's involved in this bill.

As well, what I'd like to hear from the government is that they're willing to listen to some other amendments and some other suggestions. In our party we believe that there should be some clear, legislated timelines to eliminate things like the eco tax. We believe that we should be meeting with the industries and our businesses about fostering innovation.

I think there are a lot of things that we could do together. If we hear from the government that they're willing to amend this bill further, they might get a little more support as it moves forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I return to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The conversation has been pretty positive, and I hope it continues to be.

I take issue with my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

It's interesting, because I was living in a parallel universe at the time when my friend was a mayor. It was interesting in a sense because in Manitoba, at the exact same time, the bill from the previous government was being introduced. I said at the time, "How will this ever work? You're basically setting up stewardship organizations that break the very idea of a market." If you look at the systems that were built in Manitoba—and I'm not trying to take shots, because at the time, I think there was some thinking behind it.

I'm hoping we don't start getting into a pointing-fingers game because, quite frankly, there is some shared opportunity. We've tried to incorporate those ideas. I put a lot of private members' bills from the opposition into the legislation, so you'll see some of your fingerprints on that.

This is something, in my years at the Canadian Urban Institute and others—I've worked in this field for so long, both in the public sector and in the private sector—that this is engineered on a very different set of principles. It's really creating market mechanisms and restoring the market. I think there is some opportunity, but as the member from Leeds–Grenville said, it's going to be "How do we want to approach this together?" If people get into mud about who's responsible for which piece of what's broken, that's a very destructive kind of thing. If we want to get into a discussion—people were trying to do different things at different points in time and they didn't work.

One of the things that concerns me about going to extended responsibility—this bill actually has standards, performance standards and guarantees for remote, northern and rural communities that protect the blue box and the funding. I want to say that that was very important to us, and I know it's important to members opposite. I'm glad that's in here, and if there are ways to improve

things, the government is very open to ideas on how to improve this.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): First of all, I'd like to thank all members for a great debate this morning and their comments. Since it is now close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1010 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I see some people standing, but I'm not sure—the member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to be back. Good morning.

We will be joined by members of the Ontario Association of Certified Home Inspectors: Mr. Len Inkster, Mr. Scott May and Mr. Patrick Auriol. They'll be here in a few minutes.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As all members will recall, this is the week that we kick off Kindness Week at Queen's Park, so I urge all members to be kind to each other. You will also remember that the members from Nickel Belt and Dufferin–Caledon and I, after question period, will be giving out kindness cookies. That's your reward for being kind during question period—because there are cookies waiting for you afterwards.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Mr. Speaker, I love the beard.

I wanted to introduce Aerissa Roy-Dupuis, who is a student from York University in my office, here witnessing the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would the members please join me in welcoming the family of the late Mr. John Twining Clement, MPP for Niagara Falls during the 29th Parliament, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery: his widow, Carol; daughter Marnie; stepson, Tony Clement, and his wife, Lynne Golding; and grandchildren Alex, Lauren, Jason, Maxim and Elexa. Tony Clement served as MPP for Brampton West–Mississauga during the 36th and 37th Parliaments.

We welcome all of you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And maybe numbers 31 and 32. Is that right? I can't remember.

Pat Reid has joined us, as well—thank you, Pat—and former Speaker David Warner is here. The chair of the former parliamentarians, Steve Gilchrist, is also joining us today.

JOHN CLEMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would call on the government House leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Good morning, Speaker. Happy new year to you and to all members.

Speaker, I believe that you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to John Twining

Clement, former member for Niagara Falls, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to give a tribute. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure and truly my honour today to rise and commemorate the life and career of Mr. John Clement.

I would like to start by acknowledging the members of his family who are here today as we pay our respects. John's wife, Carol, his stepson, MP Tony Clement, and Tony's wife, Lynne, are all here today. I'd also like to acknowledge John's daughter Marnie and his grandchildren Alex, Lauren, Jason and Max, and thank you all for being here today.

Born and raised in Niagara Falls—anyone who reads through the history of Mr. Clement's extraordinary life can't help but be impressed by what this man was able to accomplish in almost everything he participated in. He was a graduate of Osgoode Hall Law School, an accomplished pilot, a community man who was involved in various different community groups and, by all accounts, one of the great speakers of his day.

Mr. Clement was first elected to this House on October 21, 1971, representing the great people of my riding, Niagara Falls. Just by looking at his career highlights, it's easy to see that Mr. Clement was a very capable representative. During his five years here in the Legislature, he would hold the positions of Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations and Solicitor General, and the post of Attorney General. Throughout his five years, he played an enormous role in the direction of this province.

It is clear that in this Legislature, Mr. Clement was a man who commanded the respect of his peers both in his bench and across the aisle. But I would like to remember Mr. Clement in a more personal way. As the representative for Niagara Falls, I still have the privilege of being able to meet and talk with people whose lives he touched and those he inspired.

Perhaps one of the best examples of those stories comes from Wayne Thomson, a former mayor of Niagara Falls and a current city councillor. After decades of service to our community, there is no one Wayne hasn't met and worked with in some way or another. When you talk to Wayne about Mr. Clement, he's very straightforward. He will tell you that Mr. Clement was a great man, a man who had a reputation of doing things his way. In the community, he was a respected lawyer and a man whose heart was dedicated to the people he served.

Wayne told me that one of the things that was most memorable about Mr. Clement was his sense of humour and how involved he was in our community. Imagine that: Mr. Clement was the right-hand man of Premier Davis; he was a brilliant lawyer, one of the most respected lawmakers of his day; and yet he's most remembered for his caring personality. He is remembered for being a

man who had a sense of humour and was willing to spend his time giving back to the community. That is why he's remembered as a great representative for his constituents. Receiving such high praise from a man like Wayne Thomson does not come easy, but John Clement earned it.

Over the years in this Legislature, he fought tirelessly on behalf of his constituents and certainly made them proud, leaving an incredible legacy. The work he did on behalf of his constituents is still remembered to this day in this Legislature and certainly in Niagara Falls.

Now his political legacy carries on with his stepson, the member of Parliament for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Though John and I had different political views, I can say I am proud to follow in his footsteps. He was an excellent representative for the people of Niagara Falls. I am proud to know that those who held this position before me still have such respect in their community.

I am honoured to say that Mr. Clement was from Niagara Falls, and I'm proud to stand with my colleagues on both sides of this House today and remember his career and his service to his community.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tributes?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The eulogy that appears in the local newspaper is always very revealing, and if I can take the opportunity to steal a few words from that eulogy, it really captures the John Clement that people in the Niagara Peninsula, and indeed people who served with him in the Legislature, knew and loved. It says:

"John lived life to the fullest and achieved everything he wanted in life—he became a lawyer, a father, a pilot, a member of the provincial Legislature and, most proudly, a grandfather seven times over. He was known as a loyal and generous friend. He sat on the Niagara Falls school board, was president of the St. Catharines Flying Club and served as a member of provincial Parliament for Niagara Falls from 1971 to 1975. During that time he made lifelong friends from all political parties in the Legislature. A brilliant public speaker, he was a much sought-after master of ceremonies at both political and non-political functions for many years after he left public life."

It reminds me, when you think of a person of that nature, of a person we know, Andy Brandt, who is always wanted as a master of ceremonies at so many events. John Clement was in that particular ilk, and John Rhodes as well—these are people who served some time ago, before most members of this Legislature.

In the Niagara Peninsula, John Clement was highly respected for not only his work in the community but when he went to Queen's Park and held some senior positions—obviously an individual upon whom Bill Davis relied, with a good deal of reason, because of the kind of counsel that he gave.

I talked to a former member of the Legislature who would have known John—not that he served with him but knew him as a counsel to committees—and that was Sean Conway. The words that he kept recalling about

John Clement were the words that referred to his very, very good sense of humour. He said that to sit down with John Clement on any occasion was to enjoy stories from years gone by—but a very quick wit. He could pull a saying out of the hat so quickly and disarm an audience or others.

He was also a Progressive Conservative, back when there were Progressive Conservatives. I know there are still some around. But he was a genuine Progressive Conservative, and I admired that about him. In fact, I should tell my colleagues, when I came into the Legislature, we were you; in other words, we were the rural people of Ontario and the more small-c conservative people, and this side of the House was more progressive in those days, believe it or not. John Clement was part of that.

Sean recalled a committee for which he was counsel—this was after he was no longer a member of the Legislature. It was on Inco and Falconbridge and the terrible times that they were experiencing at that time. Ron Atkey was the counsel for Inco. Conway was a member of that particular committee and John Clement was a counsel, and John turned to Conway and said, "I think we should make Ron Atkey earn his pay as the counsel for Inco," and then mischievously, and seriously at the same time, directed many questions to Ron Atkey as the counsel for Inco.

So here was an individual, though a member of the Legislature for only one term, who had a profound effect on politics in the province of Ontario. The fact that Tony Clement is here today and has served both in this Legislature, as a member and as a minister, and in the federal Parliament as a member and minister—no doubt he received a lot of good counsel and advice from John Clement, who was a giant among people in the Legislature.

One of the things you do remember, because it was a day—and it's more the circumstances than the individuals, I think, the timing we sit and so on. He lived in a time of collegiality in the Legislature, and he was equally popular with members of the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party as he was with his own colleagues. Of course, his own colleagues would agree more with his policies of the day.

He served in senior capacities—remember, he was an Attorney General of this province, which is a prestigious and important position—as Solicitor General, as Provincial Secretary for Justice, and, at the time, in an interesting Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations.

We in this province have been very pleased to have John's family share him with us as a public figure in this province. Without a doubt, Ontario is a better place because John Clement served in this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for—

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you. It's an honour to rise in this House today on behalf of leader Patrick Brown and the Ontario PC caucus to pay tribute to and celebrate the parliamentary career of former Progressive Conservative MPP John Twining Clement.

First, let me welcome his family and friends to the Legislature, including John's wife, Carol; daughter Marnie; stepson and member of Parliament for the great riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, the Honourable Tony Clement, and his wife, Lynn Golding; and grandkids. I might name some, because they're on the list I have: Lauren, Jason, Max and Elexa.

I'm also pleased to welcome the former member for Rainy River, Patrick Reid, who I spoke with just the other day. Of course, Steve Gilchrist and former Speaker David Warner are here as well. Welcome.

In his four years in office, from 1971 to 1975, representing the people of Niagara Falls, John Clement amassed an impressive portfolio of positions held in government. This, of course, culminated in serving as the Attorney General in 1975.

Prior to his election, John Clement was a successful lawyer and member of the school board in Niagara Falls.

I was not fortunate enough to know John myself, but in preparation for this tribute, I called former Premier Bill Davis, because, of course, John Clement served in his cabinet from 1972 to 1975. He also served with my father, Frank Miller, who was first elected in the 1971 election with John. Premier Davis reminded me of the connection of the Clement family to Brampton and made me promise to mention Brampton a few times in my remarks. I'm sure that Tony Clement was influenced by and became interested in politics in part because his father was an MPP, and that led him to running and becoming the MPP for Brampton. I know, in my case, my father's involvement in politics got me interested.

Premier Davis commented that John Clement was a first-class minister. Everybody liked and respected him, including the opposition. He said that John Clement was "intellectually honest," fun to be with, and that he appeared to be relaxed and comfortable all the time. He also said he had a great sense of humour.

John's sense of humour came up with everyone I spoke to. The former Liberal member for Rainy River Patrick Reid said that John Clement was one of the all-time best joke-tellers in the Legislature. He also said that John was respected and liked by members from all political parties, and he pointed out that John became the Attorney General, a senior position in the government.

I also spoke with former colleague and cabinet minister Claude Bennett, who said what a "great fella" John was, respected by all sides of the House. He also commented on his great sense of humour.

I received this story from the family. I might point out that I received many other stories, some of which I was running over in the backroom and most of which I'm not allowed to use—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Aw, come on.

Mr. Norm Miller: —as much as I would love to, because there are some pretty good stories. But this one I received from Carol, so I think it's safe:

"When John was in first-year law school, one of his senior professors called him for a meeting where he basically told him that he thought it would be advisable

for John to look for another profession. He did not think that John was cut out for law. John did not take that advice.

"Turn the page forward to when he was made Attorney General by Bill Davis. That same professor was now a well-respected senior civil servant in the Ministry of the Attorney General. One of the first things that John did was to call him and invite him to his office for a meeting. He could not resist reminding his former professor of the last time they sat down to discuss his career choices. They both laughed and developed a friendship. In latter years, I heard that story from both of them."

John Clement loved to fly. He loved to spend an afternoon flying aerobatics in the skies over Niagara. He was a long-time president of the St. Catharines Flying Club. One of the highlights of his flying career was the 1971 air race from London, England, to Victoria, BC. I read about it many years ago in a book entitled *Don't Call Me a Legend*, about international pilot Charlie Vaughn's flying exploits, and wondered at that time if John Clement the lawyer was the same John Clement, Ontario MPP and cabinet minister. I have it here; this isn't a prop, is it?

1050

One chapter of the book describes the air race. This story demonstrates John's love of flying, sense of humour and fearless disposition. They flew in a very small aircraft, a twin-engine Piper Aztec. I would like to quote from the book because it gives an insight into the kind of person John Clement was:

"In 1971, John Clement was a lawyer living and laughing in Niagara Falls, Ontario. He was round and quick-witted. He was serious only when absolutely necessary. His measurement of any activity was the potential for having fun. As a pleasure pilot, Clement neither had the qualifications nor the aspirations to compete in a transatlantic race on his own, but the idea of doing it appealed to him."

So he talked Charlie Vaughn, his former instructor, into doing the race with him. Charlie describes flying to London with John:

"I was happy to fly for hours without saying much, but John told joke after raunchy joke. At one point, I told him that I wasn't interested in getting in trouble with women if we got a few days in London. He asked why I needed to mention that. I didn't answer him right away. so he asked what I did want to get into trouble with in London. 'Nothing,' I replied. Then I asked, 'What was the fuel level on the last dip?' 'I'm not telling you,' he said. 'You'll know soon enough when they are empty.'"

They dealt with a double engine failure, icing, navigation challenges in the pre-GPS world and a broken heater over the north Atlantic Ocean, as described here:

"As the sun touched the horizon to the north, they still had a couple of hours to go. The temperature in the cockpit continued to drop. Clement looked at the ocean and mused, 'I don't know about you, Charlie, but I wouldn't mind another double engine failure about now. I think that water would be warmer than we are.'"

And there were a few other quotes in here I'd like to use, but you'll have to read the book, I'm afraid.

John lived life to the fullest and accomplished so much; however, it was his family and especially his seven grandkids who he was most proud of.

To his family: You can be very proud of John Twining Clement. He left his mark here at the Legislature and across the great province of Ontario. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka—that kind of rolled off a lot easier than at the beginning, and I apologize—and I'd like to thank all the members for their very heartfelt and warm feelings.

The family should know that he was loved, and that we will accumulate a DVD and Hansard and send it to the family as a small token and memento of how he was felt here. Thank you very much and God bless.

Although the faces change, the demeanour hasn't. It's now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. At every corner in Whitby–Oshawa, I heard about the government's cuts to health care. Doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, technologists and patients all told me the same thing: The impacts of this government's cuts to health care are real.

The Premier says she recognizes the importance of mental health services, but she cut 25 desperately needed staff at Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences in Durham late last year. This is on top of the 31 staff cut in 2013. Because of these cuts, some wait-lists are now a year long.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier recognize how cruel it is to encourage those suffering from mental illness to seek treatment and then cut the very services they need?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, welcome back, everyone. I want to congratulate Lorne Coe on his by-election win, and all of the candidates who put their names on the ballot. Congratulations.

I know that the leader of the third party has asked a specific question about health care, and I will respond to that first by saying that we have increased health care funding year over year.

All of that is within the context of our plan. We have a plan for growing jobs and growth in Ontario. We have a plan to invest in people and their talent and skills. We are investing in infrastructure, which is creating 110,000 jobs a year right now, and will build well into the future. We are working on providing retirement security for people in this province, and we're working with businesses to make sure that we continue to be the number one jurisdiction for foreign direct investment. That's our—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier: Not a single nurse or doctor in the province believes that this government isn't cutting health care.

Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences is a unique facility that offers mental health services to the entire province. Yet Ontario Shores is now preparing for its fifth straight budget freeze. Mr. Speaker, one in three people struggling with mental health issues are not receiving the care they need and deserve in our province. In fact, the PTSD support wait-list is almost a year long at that facility. In any other area of health, that would be unacceptable.

Just last month, many from across the aisle tweeted and texted their support on Bell Let's Talk Day, so why won't the government put their money where their mouths are? Why isn't the Premier supporting Ontario Shores and other mental health facilities in this province to the level that patients deserve?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I will just say that the investments that we are making in health, including the \$138 million more for mental health that was in our 2015 budget; the increases that we have made across the board in health care, which amount to a 53% increase in health care funding since 2003; and year-over-year increases in health care, which will continue, I will say—all of that is within the context of our initiatives to grow our economy.

We know that there is a national and, in fact, an international concern about the economy. We're very pleased that Ontario is leading Canada's economy. We are the leading jurisdiction in terms of growth, and that is because we are making the investments that we know are necessary now and are needed for future prosperity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier: I appreciate the talking points, but I'm going to ask a very specific question about Ontario Shores.

The loss of 25 staff at Ontario Shores is having a devastating impact on the entire region. Their outpatient women's consultation service providing treatment for critical postpartum depression can only operate one day a week now. The geriatric memory clinic and traumatic stress clinic are facing record waiting lists.

The Premier says she is committed to giving first responders quicker access to treatment of PTSD, but then she cuts funding to important facilities like Ontario Shores.

When will the Premier admit that she's forcing the mothers, seniors and mental health patients of our province to pay for their scandals and their mismanagement? Because of your scandals, you're cutting mental health in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The truth is that we actually spend more than \$3 billion a year in this province on mental health and addictions.

It's always more complicated than the Leader of the Opposition would like to portray it. Of those positions—he hasn't mentioned, in fact, that 33 new positions are being created. He hasn't mentioned as well that those and other vacancies will be made available to the individuals that he referenced earlier. He hasn't mentioned that those decisions were made after a substantial and comprehensive review planning process, including best practices, clinical practices and engagement and consultations with the community.

Part of the solution as well, which I would hope the Leader of the Opposition would support, is, where science has demonstrated and the outcomes prove, it's often better to care for people in the community. Community resources are being provided, we're doubling the funding—we have doubled the funding in that LHIN for community supports in mental health.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The Premier knows I've always said there's no monopoly on a good idea. That's why I applauded this government's recent decision to help protect the mental health of Ontario's first responders. Our first responders play a crucial role in protecting the public's safety and well-being.

1100

Unfortunately, the government's announcement does little to help those already facing the serious and debilitating challenges of PTSD. Many of Ontario's first responders who have been diagnosed with PTSD have had their claims rejected by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. A fix to that problem exists in the member for Parkdale–High Park's bill, which would extend support for PTSD to first responders.

Mr. Speaker, why won't this government fast-track Bill 2 and get our first responders the help they deserve?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Labour is going to want to comment on this—but we recognize that PTSD is a significant risk. We understand that it is a huge challenge for people who are living in these dangerous situations in their work every single day, which is why we're bringing legislation forward, which is why we understand that prevention has to be part of those initiatives. We also understand that we need to work on what the presumptive component of that initiative would be.

We understand both parts of this. The Minister of Labour is working with the first responders and with the community to come up with the right initiatives, but we know there has to be both. There has to be prevention and we have to work on what the presumptive component of the legislation would be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier: It has now been 155 days since I asked this government to act on Bill 2. In those 155 days, I have heard from countless firefighters, police officers and paramedics who need this government's help. That's 155 days that the government has turned its back on our first responders.

The minister claims there is legislation coming, but Bill 2 has been sitting on the order paper for 244 days. Mr. Speaker, why won't the Premier do the right thing? What is stopping the Premier from passing Bill 2, other than you simply don't like it because it's an NDP bill? It is the right thing to do. Do it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, because it's inadequate. It's an inadequate piece of legislation. It is not sufficient in and of itself. It needs to be broadened. It needs to be a better—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings will withdraw.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'll withdraw.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's not that it's wrong. The core of the issue is there.

We have been working. The Minister of Labour has been very, very clear that we understand. We are building on work that we have been doing with first responders for years. We are the government that has brought in presumptive legislation for cancers. We've added diseases to that presumptive legislation.

We know that PTSD is important. We're bringing in legislation. It will be broader than Bill 2, which was a good start. We need to get it right.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier: We cannot afford to wait another 244 days. Police, paramedics and firefighters—our province's first responders—are twice as likely to suffer from PTSD as anybody else. Just a month and a half into 2016, Canada has already lost 10 first responders to PTSD.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government waiting so long to take action on this important topic?

If there are problems with that bill, amend it. What you're actually doing is you're shrinking the scope. You are doing less. You are delaying. You are dithering. Do the right thing, Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise in the House and address this question, because it is a very, very important question. I think it's one that everybody in this House understands—that the people who are on the front lines deserve the best from the government of Ontario. That's exactly what we're doing.

The Premier has asked me to bring forward a comprehensive approach that looks at preventing people from

getting PTSD in the first place—and for those people who get PTSD, to make sure they get early identification, early intervention and early treatment.

Bill 2 is not good enough for the first responders in this province. It's a good start. We need to go much further than that. When we do move ahead on this, I believe that Ontario is going to become a leader in this regard. That's what I want to see.

I will note that in the history of civilization, the PC Party has raised this issue three times. Now, all of a sudden, they're champions of PTSD.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. Order, please.

New question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd like to start by wishing everybody a happy first day of session. Welcome back to the House.

This is to the Premier. New Democrats are listening to Ontarians and this is what we're hearing: For most people, life is getting harder, families are struggling, and now the Liberals are making deep cuts to health care.

Ask any nurse or doctor and they'll tell you exactly how these Liberal cuts are hurting patients. It means longer wait times for seniors, fewer nurses in our hospitals and even more worry for families.

Why is this Premier cutting health care when she knows that these cuts are hurting Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Once again, let me just say that year over year we are increasing health care funding—every single year. We will continue to do that. We will continue to support the health care system as it goes through a transformation. We will increase funding in terms of community supports. We are increasing funding in terms of mental health.

The reality is that we are in the midst of a health care transformation which is part of an economic growth that is incredibly important for the people of this province going forward. If we don't make the investments in people and in their skills and their talents, in infrastructure, including health care infrastructure—if we don't make those investments now, we won't have the prosperity that we know we need going forward. That's why our plan is working, including increases in health care funding.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier should know what's happening in Ontario. People are waiting 200 days or more for the home care that they need. Thousands upon thousands of seniors are stuck waiting for a long-term-care bed. And the Liberals' freeze on hospital budgets has forced hospitals to cut nearly 1,200 registered nursing jobs in just over a year. Patients are suffering because of Liberal cuts but the Premier will not

even acknowledge it. She's more focused on helping her small group of friends profit off the sale of Hydro One.

It begs the question: Why does this Premier think that private profits are more important than patient care?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Here's what I think is critical: the \$270 million that we put into home and community care in the 2015 budget, the \$4.2 million for physiotherapy and the \$138 million that we put into mental health care in the 2015 budget. I would ask the leader of the third party, when the budget comes out in the near future, that she look at the increases to health care funding that will be in that budget.

We know how critical health care is to people in this province. We know with an aging population how critical it is that we get that care right, because there are families who are struggling with their elderly loved ones who are looking for the right kind of care. They may be looking for long-term care; they may be looking for home care, and we need to make sure that we make those investments in order to provide that care for people across the province. That's what we're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Andrea Horwath: I would urge this Premier to listen to Ontarians in their consultation on the budget and stop the further sell-off of Hydro One. That's what I would urge this Premier to do.

It's like this Premier doesn't know what's happening in Ontario. It's like she doesn't know that at the start of January hospitals have cut hundreds of front-line health care workers in Windsor, Hamilton, Waterloo and Sarnia. It's like she doesn't think about those patients who have waited months and months for surgery and are forced to watch helplessly as this government cuts the health care system. I try to put myself in their shoes. It must be the most discouraging, frustrating and painful experience.

Will this Premier take just a moment, Speaker—just a moment—to think about those patients who are waiting for care, and tell them why she thinks that they should wait even longer?

1110

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party asks that we listen to the people of Ontario, which we do.

I know that the leader of the third party understands that even in a narrow way, in terms of the budget—we listen on all sorts of subjects, but in terms of budget consultations, we have talked to thousands of people across the province face to face, online. We have heard those voices. We understand that there are concerns, and those voices will be reflected in the budget that we bring forward.

I think the other reality is that the leader of the third party doesn't talk about the other part of the equation. She talks about where there are challenges, but she doesn't talk about, for example, the three hospitals—Orillia Soldiers' Memorial, Hamilton Health Sciences, and Ottawa Hospital—that are all advertising positions,

that are looking for nurses to hire. That's the other part of the equation.

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. For most Ontarians, life is getting harder, and this government just isn't helping. People are looking for good jobs that actually pay the bills. Too many Ontarians find it harder than ever to get decent work and good paycheques.

But rather than helping people, we see Liberals facing criminal charges for their conduct, and a Premier who is more focused on helping private investors profit from the sale of Hydro One. Why does this Premier not share the priorities of the people of this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am acutely aware of the concerns that people have about the economy in this country and the economy globally. I know that people are concerned about the future, which is exactly why we are making the investments that we are making. It is exactly why our plan is designed to make sure that we do everything in our power to work with businesses like Chrysler, to make sure that there are more jobs created in Ontario rather than fewer. It's exactly why we are moving on retirement security so that people can look forward to a retirement that is secure. It is exactly why we are investing in people's talent and skills. It is exactly why we're investing in infrastructure that is creating 110,000 jobs a year right now and economic growth into the future. That's why our plan is designed the way it is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's what is happening in the Ontario that the Premier doesn't think about. Fewer than half of all workers in the GTHA are in permanent full-time jobs—fewer than half. Windsor has the highest unemployment rate in the country for five months and counting.

Families feel like there are two different worlds in this province. There's an Ontario where the Premier protects her friends and insiders, and then there's one for the rest of us, where families simply cannot keep up. Why is this Premier so far out of touch with the real priorities of Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I will say to the leader of the third party, there is no doubt that there are concerns about the national economy. I understand that. I understand that we are in a challenging time as a country.

But the reality is that Ontario is leading growth in this country. The reality is that our unemployment rate is below the national average. There are 600,000 net new jobs that have been created since 2008-09, including more than 40,000 over the last couple of months in Ontario. The fact is that we are doing everything in our power—and it is working—to keep Ontario on that track, to keep Ontario as a leader. It is our responsibility, given our diverse economy, given what's happening across the country, that we stay as strong and grow as much as we can. That's exactly what we're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When the Premier boasts of opportunity and growth, most Ontarians have one question and that is, "For whom?"

Who is really getting ahead here in Ontario? It's not the men and women who are out of work and too young to retire but too old to start over. It's not the 300,000 families who have lost their good manufacturing jobs in this province, and it's certainly not young people, who are stuck with an unemployment rate well above the national average. Those folks want to know: Why isn't this Premier working for them?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Given the rhetoric of the leader of the third party, I would think that she'd be very supportive of the initiatives that we have taken that are bearing fruit. She'd be supportive of the \$565 million in youth employment funding that we put in place, which has found thousands of young people places.

She'd be supportive of Experience Ontario, where young people across the country are having an opportunity to have a work experience that would lead to post-secondary education. She would be supportive of the partnerships with business that have made us the number one jurisdiction for foreign direct investment.

That's a statistic, Mr. Speaker, but the reality is, that means jobs. That means jobs created here, across the province. So I would expect that the leader of the third party would support all of those things and, as the leader of the NDP, that she would support the investments in infrastructure that are creating 110,000 jobs every year.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Norm Miller: Mr. Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Premier.

Premier, the Nipigon bridge is a key asset to the province of Ontario. In December, I was able to drive across it with PC Leader Patrick Brown. Little did we know at the time that the two lanes of the bridge would only be operating for less than a month. When the Nipigon bridge failed on January 11, the only detour available was through the United States. Today, people wishing to cross it still face delays to use the single lane that is safe to travel.

Safe winter roads and reliable infrastructure are absolute necessities to the economy of northern Ontario.

The people of Nipigon have a right to know: Can't this Liberal government get anything right? How is it possible that, under the watch of this government, such a key piece of brand new infrastructure was allowed to fail?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member opposite for the question.

First, Speaker, let me take just a quick moment to acknowledge the leadership shown by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, who also happens to be the local MPP for this community. From the very day

this incident took place, that member has shown tremendous local leadership.

I also want to acknowledge that all of the communities in the area—from Nipigon to Marathon to our First Nations partners in the area—whom I've had the chance to meet with directly have all been exceptionally patient and understanding. We work closely with them and will continue to do that, Speaker.

What I've said and what the Minister of Northern Development and Mines has said is that we anticipate that before the end of February or by the end of February, the second lane of traffic will be reopened on this bridge. It's important for us to make sure that we do get to the bottom of what took place, that we provide accurate information to the public, and that we get that bridge reopened and operating safely as soon as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Premier, the Nipigon bridge is as critical a piece of infrastructure as we have in Ontario. It is the single link that connects the Trans-Canada Highway. It is estimated that over \$100 million of goods travels across the Nipigon bridge each day. Uncertainty of travel times is slowing this flow of goods to market, and has a negative impact on the northern economy and, ultimately, the entire province.

The construction of the Nipigon bridge has already been estimated to cost \$106 million, and the bridge failure will only add to the cost.

The government has promised that the two lanes of the Nipigon bridge will be reopened by the end of February. So my question, Mr. Speaker: Will the Premier meet this deadline, or is it simply another stretch goal of this government?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'll reiterate at the beginning of this answer, as I said in my original answer, that we do anticipate that the second lane of traffic will be reopened by the end of February.

But what I can't help finding curious from that member, and that question specifically, is that he seems to not remember that over the last 12 or 13 years, we are the government that's invested \$1.9 billion to four-lane highways in northern Ontario, and that in my three years in this Legislature, year after year, as we included more money to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars for highways in northern Ontario, that member and that party have consistently voted against the budgets that have delivered strong futures for the people of the north, Speaker.

We're going to get the bridge reopened, and this year you should join with us to support a budget that will build this province up.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member is taking a chance.

New question.

1120

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Climate change is one of the most important and far-reaching issues facing this planet. But by selling Hydro One, this government is making it more difficult for Ontario to take action on climate change. Hydro One is moving into the hands of private owners. They have no interest in conservation, since they make more profit when people use more electricity, not less. Hydro One is now moving into the hands of private owners who have no interest in upgrading the grid and connecting to renewable energy sources unless they're guaranteed fat profit and zero risks.

Why is the government making climate change action more difficult by selling off Hydro One?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm always amazed at the ability of the NDP to spend money but never tell us where it's coming from.

You may have noticed that we're moving forward with a carbon market and pricing program, but we don't have that revenue yet. We just committed to a major home retrofit program to help people reduce their heating costs and cooling costs and create jobs; a major electric vehicle subsidy program; and an electric charging program. Well, that money didn't come from pixie dust and fairies, Mr. Speaker. It actually came from trying to manage out of the difficult recession without increasing the tax burden and reducing services.

Broadening ownership of part of a utility, which is terrifyingly, ideologically fraying for that party, is, in the world of most people, a pragmatic solution to finding money to create jobs and build our economy.

I'd be happy, in the supplementary, to elaborate further.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I guess the minister didn't want to answer that question, so I'll go to the second part.

Germany privatized much of its transmission grid in the 1990s, and now Germany realizes that they made a huge mistake. They now realize that if they're to move towards a low-carbon, renewably powered economy, the public needs to own and control the grid.

The government has often looked to Germany for lessons from its renewable energy transition. Will the government learn from Germany's great mistake and stop the further privatization of Hydro One?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Germany is closing 11 nuclear plants right now, and I don't think we would do that, given the implications that they've got coal coming back online. I don't think we need to take lessons from Germany.

One of the things this government realizes is that the world is changing at a very fast rate. You can go to Barrie, my friend MPP Hoggarth's riding—we were out there the other day. People are now buying homes with batteries, inverters, ground-source heat pumps, solar and

computers. They're buying that because they're net zero, and they're actually called prosumers. They actually generate more revenue.

One of the challenges for government is going to be managing those old industrial assets that we have to for another 30, 40 years. We have to get more life out of them. We have to look at new and innovative ways to get revenues from assets that, quite frankly, in some cases, there is going to be less demand for and put them into assets like transit and other things that there will be greater demand for. To most Ontarians, I think, that's a sensible approach. It certainly seems to be to this government.

GOVERNMENT ANTI-RACISM PROGRAMS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is to the minister responsible for the Anti-Racism Directorate. Members of this House noted that the Anti-Racism Directorate was eliminated by the Progressive Conservatives in 1995. Over a decade later, I'm proud to be part of a government reinstating the Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate.

Canada and Ontario have long been bastions for principles like acceptance and equality. While these values remain at the core of our cultural identity, the reinstatement of the Anti-Racism Directorate by our government indicates our commitment to remove the social and economic barriers inhibiting true equality.

I would like to ask the minister responsible for the Anti-Racism Directorate to inform this House on why the new directorate was created.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for the question, and also thank the Premier for entrusting me with this responsibility that I take quite seriously.

As every member of this House is aware, individual, systemic and cultural racism continue to create unfair outcomes for racial minorities in Ontario. The time has come to remove social and economic barriers that prevent our province from achieving true equity.

In order to address racism in all forms, our government is creating a new Anti-Racism Directorate. By creating this new directorate, our government is demonstrating its commitment to building an inclusive province so that everyone, regardless of their race, ethnicity or cultural background, has an equal opportunity to succeed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you to the minister. Under no circumstance should an individual's social status or economic potential be defined by the colour of their skin, their ethnicity or cultural heritage.

Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly support the creation of the Anti-Racism Directorate and the objectives articulated by the minister.

With Canada's population growth rate below replacement levels and our continued expansion dependent on immigration, achieving true equality is even more important.

As a member of this Legislature and a diverse Canadian, I believe that this Anti-Racism Directorate is an important next step for Ontario. With that in mind, I would like to ask the minister responsible for the Anti-Racism Directorate how the directorate will go about achieving its objectives.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Again, thank you to the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for the follow-up question. I know he's a strong supporter of equity here in the province of Ontario.

The Anti-Racism Directorate's aim is to increase public education and awareness of racism, to create a more inclusive province; and to apply an anti-racism lens in developing, implementing and evaluating government policies, programs and services. This newly established directorate will achieve this by working with key partners from education, community-based organizations, different institutions and, of course, the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

Mr. Speaker, racism continues to create unfair outcomes for racial minorities here in Ontario. By creating this new directorate, our government is building an inclusive province where everyone has the equal opportunity to succeed, do well and build the province that we all aspire to.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. The latest Metrolinx numbers have revealed that the near-empty UP ghost express has become even emptier: 170-seat trains rolling with less than six passengers; 2,200 passengers a day in December, well short of the 5,000 goal. All the while, we foot the bill for a botched fare-setting that was designed to pay for the unnecessary luxury, terminal-to-train boutique excess this government insisted on.

Every day that the trains get emptier, the costs grow larger. Until the fares are lowered, people will take the more economical, accessible Uber option.

Speaker, she has seen the numbers. Will the Premier tell us when she will move past assessment and discussion to actually act?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member opposite for the question. Over the last number of days, myself, the Premier and others at Metrolinx have discussed this very topic. We have all said publicly—in fact, just last week we said publicly—that we are currently analyzing the entire situation. We're looking at every option.

We understand that the ridership needs to come up. What we've seen this past weekend is that there is a great deal of curiosity, interest and support for this particular service as it relates to linking Union and Pearson, but also as it relates to providing more service or transit options for people in the west end of Toronto.

Over the coming days, we'll continue to conduct this analysis. We'll complete that work and we will respond accordingly as soon as we are ready.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, when we asked the government to take a look at fare reductions, I didn't think he'd actually take me up on it and make it for free.

However, it's not just the UP Express. Last month, we were stunned to learn that this government oversaw plans for a \$250-million Union Station train shed renovation and forgot to make sure their promised electric trains actually fit. How can you approve a plan for a quarter-billion-dollar train shed renovation and neglect to ensure that the trains actually fit in the shed?

1130

Speaker, this is a classic Liberal plan—spend first and ask questions later—steamrolling ahead with transit photo ops without concern for cost overruns and logistical challenges. This is a project that's already 25% over initial cost estimates.

Will the Premier tell us how much more it will cost to actually get her electric trains in the shed?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Of course, the team at Metrolinx, working closely with the Ministry of Transportation, has a plan over the next decade to literally transform the GO network. That member, representing the part of the province that he represents, will be well aware that we made a commitment over the next decade to take the existing GO service, which is extremely popular and well-used, and transform that into two-way, all-day GO service, with electrification on core segments and trains running at intervals of up to 15 minutes on those core segments. As part of that plan, we are increasing capacity at Union Station, Speaker.

But as I said to the member from Parry Sound in his earlier question, what I find remarkable is witnessing that member and that caucus repeatedly vote against every undertaking from this government and this Premier to invest in more infrastructure, to deliver more transit. They've opposed it, and now they're complaining that we're not delivering fast enough, notwithstanding their opposition, Speaker. Maybe they can get their story straight—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. After having travelled across the province over the last month for pre-budget consultations, it has become increasingly clear to New Democrats that Ontario is divided. We heard some heartbreaking and painful experiences from the people of this province. On the one hand, there is an Ontario where a small group of powerful insiders who have the ear of the Premier are flourishing; then there's the rest of Ontarians, who are struggling to keep up. They're worried about finding good jobs. They're worried about keeping good jobs and retiring from good jobs.

Premier, what does this government have to say to Ontario's youth, who are struggling to find work, to

people who are working three jobs to make ends meet and to people whose jobs are at risk after a lifetime of service?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I would say to people who are in those situations, who are struggling, is that I understand that this is a challenging time. As I've said before, it's a challenging time in the national economy. Ontario is leading that economy, though. Ontario is leading in this country in terms of job creation, in terms of foreign direct investment that leads to jobs, in terms of investment that is creating jobs.

We are doing everything in our power to increase the growth in the province and to stay as a leader in the country. It is our responsibility as the largest province in the country, the most diverse economy in the country, to be strong, particularly when there are other economies that are struggling.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, our investments in infrastructure, in people's talent and skills, in their retirement security and in working with business are working. We are creating jobs, working together. We will continue to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Premier, the pre-budget consultations have been a stark reminder that the gap between those who are doing well and those who are falling behind is only getting wider. St. Catharines, Niagara and Sudbury have unemployment rates of 8.6%, two points above the provincial average. Windsor's unemployment rate is 9.3%, the highest in Canada. Windsor also has the highest youth unemployment rate in the country for the last five months and counting. These are not rates that warrant bragging rights.

Unlike this government, New Democrats are listening to families, to students and to seniors, and they're saying that good jobs are hard to find and hard to keep. Premier, what does this government have to say to the thousands of Ontarians who are unemployed, underemployed and precariously employed under the Liberal watch?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would say to the member opposite that I'm sure that she has listened with interest, then, as Chrysler announced more jobs in Windsor than expected, and that she has heard the job numbers over the last couple of months—with net new jobs of more than 40,000, and that the vast majority of those are full-time jobs, Mr. Speaker. I know that the member opposite is paying attention to those.

In terms of listening to the people in the province, Mr. Speaker, we did pre-budget consultations across the province: nine weeks of engagement of in-person, online, written and telephone engagement, and 20 in-person consultations in 12 cities. We heard from 700 people. So there are thousands of people from around the province from whom we have heard. We have heard their concerns; their concerns will be reflected in the budget.

The fact is, the plan we've put in place, working with the private sector—because government doesn't create jobs—it's working—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade.

International markets play a critical role in the growth of Ontario's economy. Trade missions are the best way for us to connect Ontario businesses with the international market. To boost Ontario's economy, we must attract new investments, facilitate partnerships and help businesses export globally.

Speaker, the Premier and minister have organized and led a number of international trade missions to do just that. In 2014, the Premier and minister's mission to China secured \$1 billion in investments and 1,400 jobs for Ontarians. Last year, another mission secured an additional \$2.5 billion and 1,700 jobs.

Speaker, in January the Premier departed for the first trade mission of 2016 to India. Could the minister please tell us about that mission and what it will mean for Ontario?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you, Speaker, for the question, and I want to thank the honourable member for asking it.

Earlier this month the Premier led a very successful trade mission to India. This trade mission led us to cities like New Delhi, Chandigarh, Hyderabad and Mumbai, and drew on Ontario's expertise in sustainable development and urban infrastructure. We were able to have valuable meetings with key Indian officials and leaders, including the Prime Minister of India, Prime Minister Modi, which will help strengthen our economic ties with states and businesses.

We signed 65 new agreements between businesses and institutions from Ontario and India, valued at over \$240 million, creating more than 150 jobs in Ontario.

Premier Wynne also signed MOUs with five Indian—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for his answer. It is so good to see our government and our business and institutional stakeholders taking our Going Global challenge so seriously. Our natural links to India and the goodwill built up in this mission will improve the trade and investment relationship between India and Ontario in the future.

A number of the MOUs appear to involve investments and opportunities for global growth for Ontario businesses and jobs here in Ontario.

With 700,000 Indo-Canadians residing in Ontario, we should be building stronger ties with India's business community. India may now be the fastest-growing economy in the world and it's time for us to invest and reach out to that emerging economic power.

Minister, can you tell this Legislature how this mission will build a stronger business relationship between Ontario and India?

Hon. Michael Chan: The Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Minister of International Trade outlined some of the successful outcomes achieved on this trip in terms of MOUs and investments landed. That's all extremely important.

Also important are the opportunities to build stronger relationships with Indian businesses that will result in even more future investments and jobs. We met with numerous influential Indian companies, including Essel, Tata, Tech Mahindra, Mitra, Birla, Hero MotoCorp, High Tech Industries, ICICI Bank, and Paytm, among many others. We identified many opportunities for future collaboration, investment and partnerships.

And we went to bat, Mr. Speaker, for Ontario companies and communities, from Novo Plastics in Markham, Ontario, to Datawind in Mississauga. They landed significant opportunities, demonstrating how successful Ontario companies can be when they go global.

This mission was very successful, and I look forward to following up on the many leads that we identified.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. After the events this past week, of two violent domestic assaults resulting in the death of four people and severe injuries to a fifth, in Odessa and Almonte, and the three murders of women last fall in Renfrew county, the public is acutely aware that there are grave shortcomings and a failure by police, our correctional institutions and our courts to protect women and their families from domestic violence. However, the many and numerous recommendations by my colleagues from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke have fallen on the deaf ears and the idle hands of this government.

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The government is failing to protect women and their families from domestic violence. What the public wants to know, what my caucus wants to know and what I want to know is: Why?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The minister responsible for women.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I thank the member for raising this very important question.

Violence against women is indeed a very serious problem. It should never be tolerated in Ontario or elsewhere. This is a huge priority for me, as the minister responsible for women's issues. That's why our government continues to take concrete action to make the province safer for women.

I am aware of the cases that the member has raised. I'm working very closely with my colleague the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. There are a number of investments being made, not just in our two ministries, but also with the Attorney General and other ministries, to take a coordinated approach to our response.

Our annual funding to combat gender-based violence is approximately \$456 million a year. That includes many

initiatives, not the least of which is our sexual violence and harassment action plan, which was launched last year with the leadership of our Premier. We're acting on legislative and program support initiatives associated with that, and we're taking it very seriously.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, back to the Minister of Correctional Services: Many of those guilty of domestic violence are sentenced with a recommendation to serve their sentence in specialized treatment facilities for mental health and addictions in order to rehabilitate their violent behaviour. However, there are often no vacancies in these facilities, and the offenders are placed in general population, not getting the treatment they need, nor what the courts have ordered. While the court is expecting rehabilitation, in reality this seldom happens.

Our courts and our jails are failing each other and failing the people of Ontario. When will both our recommendations and those of the courts not be viewed with contempt and no longer fall on deaf ears and idle hands, but be heeded by this government?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I appreciate again the member raising the important issue, specifically around domestic violence.

Our Ontario Women's Directorate has implemented many initiatives to raise awareness and provide supports for victims. This has been going on since 2004. We have many programs and policies in response to that. We have training of front-line professionals. We have public education campaigns. We have the employment training for abused and at-risk women. We have a language interpreter program.

But as my colleague the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services has raised before, we are working very closely with our partners in policing and the Attorney General to look at domestic violence, to look at what happens when someone is released from offence and what that means to the community. I'll be happy to follow up with the member directly—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier.

Top Liberal insiders are presently before the courts facing various criminal charges for their roles in both the gas plants scandal and the Sudbury by-election. That's now multiple police investigations into the Liberals' wrongdoing connected to your office, the Office of the Premier.

My question is: Is this a record that you're proud of?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the government House leader is going to want to say something on this front, but I will just say that the circumstances around the investigation concerned events that took place before I was the Premier. I think the member knows that. There is a matter before the courts. It would be inappropriate for me to say more at this point, so I will not.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I thought the question was pretty straightforward. It was, "Are you proud of that record?" At the end of the day, you're the Premier of Ontario. You're responsible to that office, and I asked you a question. Obviously, you decided not to answer it.

Let me ask you this: Are you going to be forthcoming in working with whomever—the police, the courts, whoever it is—in order to get to the bottom of these things, and be fully co-operative in the investigation of these matters? Yes or no?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I'm surprised that on the first day back in the Legislature, the member opposite is not spending time talking about issues that are important to Ontarians but is mudslinging himself right now. He very much is aware that these issues are before the courts, and any interference from this House will be highly inappropriate.

Speaker, what I want to talk about is how proud we are of the work that the Premier is doing when it comes to building Ontario up by making sure that we are making historical investments in our infrastructure in every single community in our ridings; by making sure that our health care continues to get better and better and our seniors are getting better health care in our communities, and that our education system in this province—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Our education system in this province is one of the best in the world.

Of course, those are good things, and the member opposite does not want to talk about those, so of course what he does is try to talk about a court case which he knows we should not be discussing in this House.

I say to him, Speaker, that we should focus on issues at hand, to build a stronger economy in our province.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Granville Anderson: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport and the newly appointed minister responsible for the Anti-Racism Secretariat.

Today, the minister will be bringing a bill before the House to proclaim Black History Month in perpetuity. While Ontario was the first jurisdiction in Canada to proclaim Black History Month, our government did so annually by passing a proclamation through cabinet.

We have a significant legacy of black history here in Ontario, a legacy that deserves to be celebrated and enshrined into law. Could the minister please inform the members of this House why Black History Month is so important and deserves our support?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to thank the member from Durham for the question.

Ontario first proclaimed February as Black History Month back in 1993, and it was an important year

because it marked the 200th anniversary of a law banning the importation of slaves into Upper Canada, a motion enacted into law by our province's first Lieutenant Governor. I believe that this was one of the first signs of a pathway—that Canada would be formally recognized as a very progressive, culturally diverse, multicultural, and a place that's built on equity. These values are important to our identity as Canadians and as Ontarians centuries later.

If this legislation is passed, it will proclaim February as Black History Month, and it will ensure that Ontarians have an opportunity to reflect on the contributions of black men and women here in the province of Ontario to black Canadian history and Ontario's history.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you to the minister. Ontario and Canada have always been active on the global stage in recognizing human rights and denouncing racism and inequality.

Ontario was a beacon of hope to American slaves seeking freedom, and the final destination for over 30,000 slaves who traversed the Underground Railroad.

We honour international figures who further equality, like the late Nelson Mandela, the first living person awarded honorary Canadian citizenship, and a member of the Order of Canada.

Could the minister responsible for the Anti-Racism Secretariat please highlight the legacies left by our black forebears?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member for the follow-up question.

I think it's important for us to recognize the contribution of black Canadians here in the Legislature and throughout Ontario: Ontarians like Leonard Braithwaite, MPP, who served in this Legislature and was a civil rights advocate and fought to ensure that equality was brought forward for all people here in Ontario; Charlie Roach, a human rights activist and a lawyer here in Ontario; and of course, Mary Ann Shadd, the first female black publisher and, I believe, the first female publisher in Ontario, when she first—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Alvin Curling.

Hon. Michael Coteau: And of course, Alvin Curling, one of our many friends of many people in the Legislature here.

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Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to remember and to continue to celebrate the contributions of black Ontarians and black Canadians here in Ontario, and I'm very proud that this legislation will allow all of us here in the Legislature to do that.

HOSPITAL FUNDING FINANCEMENT DES HÔPITAUX

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is to the Minister of Health.

The minister is well aware of the impact his health cuts are having around Ontario. My riding of Simcoe North will continue to feel the minister's health cuts if he doesn't stop them. The proposed \$5.2 million in cuts to Georgian Bay General Hospital are atrocious. The Liberals are cutting funding to medium-sized hospitals across Ontario. They are eliminating at Georgian Bay General top-level services like emergency room care, and completely wiping out obstetrics.

Mr. Speaker, is the minister going to turn his back on the residents of Simcoe North and cut these essential services?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The Leader of the Opposition knows full well that no decisions have been taken by the hospital, first of all.

There was a report as the result of a process—which was an open and public process that involved community consultation and involvement of the local LHIN as well, and of course the hospital—that made a series of recommendations that would ensure sustainability of that hospital and the highest quality of care going into the future. Those recommendations were received by the hospital in December. There have been no decisions by the hospital. There have been no decisions by the LHIN. There have been no decisions by the ministry.

But I do know that the Leader of the Opposition, prior to making any efforts to sit down and meet with the hospital to get a full understanding of the situation, did go out into the public domain and raise a lot of anxiety by suggesting that these changes were imminent, when in fact it was simply a set of recommendations that haven't been considered by those three levels: the hospital, the LHIN and the ministry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the minister: The hospital has said very clearly, as has the LHIN, that these are cuts they have to make because of the health budget that you have presented.

What I find more shocking is that on December 17, the minister released his paper Patients First. He said he wanted to strengthen health outcomes for indigenous and francophone communities. Well, what is more hypocritical than putting out a paper in mid-December saying that you—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I will withdraw the word "hypocritical."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No comments. Just simply withdraw, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Carry on, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Well, what is more wrong than releasing a paper promising support, and then cutting health care to those very same individuals?

The chief of Beausoleil First Nation has written you and explained how the impacts of these cuts on Georgian Bay General will hurt indigenous communities. The

mayor of Penetanguishene has written to you saying they will hurt francophone communities.

Monsieur le Président, est-ce que le ministre va arrêter de couper les services dans mon comté?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the leader of the third party is suggesting that we should never review the sustainability of our hospitals, that we should never get expert advice in terms of changes that can be made to improve the level of care and the quality of care that's being provided.

I believe there were more than 100 recommendations made by this review that were received by the hospital in December. We're currently reviewing those recommendations; the LHIN is reviewing those recommendations; the hospital is reviewing those recommendations. Finally, the member opposite did accept an invitation by the hospital to actually sit down and discuss this.

No decisions have been made, Mr. Speaker, and I would implore the Leader of the Opposition not to inflame the situation and create anxiety where no anxiety is required. Of course, the sort of information that he's alluding to, the community input, is precisely what we're looking to see. We want to make sure that the quality of care that is provided is the best possible care. But there were more than 100 recommendations, and the member knows that full well. Nothing has been decided.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Less than three months ago, the \$106-million Nipigon River Bridge opened to traffic. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines described the bridge as the government's crown jewel. But less than two months later, winter came and some bolts snapped in the cold. The \$106-million bridge buckled and failed. The failure of this bridge has literally cut Canada in two.

How is it possible for the government to spend \$106 million without making sure that this bridge could withstand an Ontario winter, and who is responsible for signing off on a bridge that failed upon its first encounter with an Ontario winter?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member from Niagara Falls for the question.

As I said earlier today, we anticipate that the second lane of traffic will be open on the bridge by the end of February.

It's just really important to make sure that we have accurate information, not only on this topic but on all here in this House. I should mention that the design of this bridge, like the design of all of the bridges that we have in the province of Ontario, is done in accordance with the Canadian Highway Bridge Design Code, which means that it's capable of withstanding the necessary code design parameters for winds in excess of 100 kilometres an hour and climactic conditions including freezing temperatures well below minus 40 degrees Celsius.

For 100 years, the Ministry of Transportation has built a network, a system of roads, highways, bridges and public transit across the province of Ontario. It's these high standards to which we hold ourselves accountable.

We'll have that second lane of traffic open by the end of February.

VISITOR

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to welcome my friend and neighbour, from North Dumfries township, John Holman to the Legislature today. I'm proud of the work he does as a firefighter.

BRUNO ROMANO

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I wonder if I might ask members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating a member of our Legislative Security Services, Sergeant Bruno Romano, on his recent wedding.

Congratulations, Bruno. Best wishes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think a more appropriate way to acknowledge Bruno would be to snap your fingers.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Patrick Brown: I'd like to correct my record. I originally said that Bill 2 sat on the order paper for 244 days, which is actually incorrect. It has sat on the order paper for 589 days. Bill 2 was introduced in 2014, not 2015.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members have an opportunity to correct their records.

This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1157 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to introduce Jeff Turner, who I believe is outside right now. Jeff is with an organization called Kind Canada, which was started by Rabbi Reuven Bulka in Ottawa to promote kindness across Canada, similarly as we have done in this Legislature by declaring the third week of February as Kindness Week in the province of Ontario. On behalf of all members, I want to welcome Jeff Turner to Queen's Park. It's good to see you, Jeff.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to introduce a friend of mine, who has actually just moved back from Alberta to live in Ontario, Allan Rewak, who is here with us again. We'd like to welcome Allan back to Ontario.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I think he's just coming in as we speak. I have Bishop Fisher from the Family Worship Centre in Pickering here to join us today to celebrate Black History Month. He's joined by his lovely daughter.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LUNAR NEW YEAR

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Gong Hay Fat Choy. Last week's celebrations for the Lunar New Year began for Canadians of Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese heritage. I and many of my colleagues in our caucus have had the opportunity to participate in festivities across the province. It has been a real honour to be a part of celebrating the traditions of Chinese New Year, Seollal and Tet.

From the ringing of the peace bell to exchanging lucky red envelopes to visiting the new year's markets, it has been a pleasure to welcome the Year of the Monkey. February in our great country isn't the warmest or brightest of times, and these celebrations bring a wonderful vibrancy and excitement to our communities.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean Canadians, who are so welcoming and who contribute so much to our culture and economy here in Ontario.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Patrick Brown, I offer my warmest wishes to everybody celebrating the Lunar New Year. I hope the Year of the Monkey will bring happiness, health and prosperity for all. Gong Xi Fa Cai. Chuc Mung Nam Moi.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to make this comment to the government, both to the Premier and the Minister of Energy, who should be keenly interested in this, and that is the price of gas. If you look at the price at the pump as it relates to what it is at the barrel, there is clearly no connection.

Depending on where you live in this province, the difference could be fairly great. For example, last week, the price difference between Ottawa and northern Ontario was almost 30 cents a litre. Nobody is going to argue to me that that's the cost of transportation. I'll tell you what it is: It's the gas companies gouging the consumers, trying to get as much as they can out of consumers and getting away with it.

I just want to say to the Minister of Energy, and I want to say to the Premier directly, that we have a responsibility, as a province, to deal with this. This is clearly gouging, pure and simple. This is not a question where they're just having a hard time trying to figure out what the price is; this is them wanting to gouge the public and being allowed to do it.

We, as a province, have authority over energy, including the retail price of gas. I just say to the government across the way that what we need to do is tell these oil companies to get themselves back in line with what the price of gas should be at the pump, related to the price of a barrel. If they're not prepared to do that by way of cajoling, then we should do what we have the authority to do, and that is to regulate the gas industry once and for all.

SOUPER TIME

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Mr. Speaker, like the rest of my colleagues on both sides of the House, I very much value and enjoy the time we get to spend outside of this chamber back in our constituencies, meeting with folks and visiting with organizations, hearing their concerns and celebrations for their achievements.

Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago I was pleased to be able to visit an event at St. Peter's church in Cobourg called Souper Time. This is a community organization event sponsored by Neighbourlink, a partnership of local churches, which provides a hot bowl of soup and a sandwich, often prepared and donated by restaurants and volunteers throughout the community to support local resident needs.

Parishioners with the "parish nurse" designation are on hand to provide valuable advice and support, such as foot care clinics and blood pressure checks. Oral hygiene specialists with the Northumberland Oral Health Coalition, in partnership with the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit to provide basic oral health care clinics for low-income individuals in need of support and advice.

I'd like to recognize Pat Weller for her vision and courage to start this program by recognizing the needs and reaching out to the community organization to get the ball rolling; Fran Richardson and Kristina Nairn for their professional service and contribution; and the many other dedicated volunteers who serve faithfully five days a week. It is the valuable effort of volunteers like this that truly make our communities a better place to live.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM
FUNDING

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise today with a message for the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. Like everyone, I was shocked last week when his ministry denied the village of Westport a critical infrastructure grant. I can't emphasize enough the importance of Westport's application for funding to modernize its failing wastewater treatment system.

Two years ago this aging system caused 24 million litres of effluent to be discharged into the UNESCO World Heritage-designated Rideau Canal waterway. This is the very definition of an urgent infrastructure project, one this government should be all over. Anyone with even a passing knowledge of this looming public health and environmental crisis could see why this funding was so imperative. How a government presented with such a comprehensive application, supported by evidence and endorsed by local, federal and provincial officials, could reject it is not just inexplicable; it's unacceptable.

I have written to Minister Duguid asking him to reconsider this terrible decision, and meet to with me and village Mayor Robin Jones at next week's ROMA/OGRA conference. In just over a year in office, Mayor Jones and her council have done a tremendous job

addressing the crisis. Working under tight time frames, they've put a responsible plan in place, but with such a small tax base, it's simply unreasonable to think the village can bear the cost of this project alone. Minister, I'm confident your review will show that the evidence to support funding this project is overwhelming, as are the consequences for the environment and this village's future.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

M^{me} France Gélinas: On our first day back in the Legislature, I want to talk about winter road maintenance. At the north end of my riding are the communities of Ivanhoe Lake and Foleyet, both of them on Highway 101, which is kind of between Chapleau and Timmins. For some reason, some of Highway 101 is classified as level 2 and some of it is classified as level 3. What does that mean? It means that anyone driving from Ivanhoe or Foleyet to Chapleau or Timmins, or vice versa, will drive on clear pavement for a while, then snow-covered pavement for a while, then clear pavement again. This erratic highway cleaning pattern makes the trip really dangerous.

But it gets worse, Speaker, in beautiful Gogama, only three kilometres off of Highway 144. The snow-plowing equipment for the 144 is located in Gogama, but the road that connects the community to Highway 144 does not get cleaned. Listen to this, Speaker: The snowplow drives the three kilometres with its plow up, then gets to 144 and puts the plow down. There is no high school in Gogama. Every morning, the students do the one-way 112-kilometre trip to go to Timmins, and yes, you guessed it, they start off on a road that is not plowed.

I don't know who dreams up these things, but they make no sense. They need to be fixed so that the people of northern Ontario can feel secure on our highways.

1510

LUNAR NEW YEAR

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and welcome back.

This past Saturday, February 13, I was honoured to join over 1,500 Tibetan Canadians and their friends for a celebration of the Tibetan New Year, Losar. The Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre in my riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore hosts all the important celebrations of the Tibetan Canadian community, and this time, an overflow crowd came together to celebrate the new year.

On February 9, the Tibetan year of the male fire monkey—2143—was begun, and, as is tradition, this brings a time of great joy and celebration in the Tibetan community. The year began with a three-day festival that mixes sacred and secular practices: prayers, ceremonies, hanging prayer flags, sacred and folk dancing and, of course, partying. It is the most widely celebrated of all the Tibetan festivals and represents a time for all things to be purified and renewed.

We were all pleased to receive greeting and blessings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama as he extended his Losar message to the Tibetan diaspora worldwide. His Holiness enjoined everyone to create the causes of happiness by leading lives that benefit others.

Our Tibetan community is made up of thousands of hard-working people who seek to live the benevolent, peaceful lives that His Holiness teaches. I extend to all Tibetans my wishes for Losar Tashi Delek.

EARTHQUAKE IN TAIWAN

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I rise to recognize the lunar new year, a major annual event for Chinese communities around the world. Sadly, as we began this time of celebration, Taiwan experienced a large earthquake that caused significant damage.

Just one day before the lunar new year's eve on Saturday, February 6, a 6.4-magnitude earthquake struck Taiwan and caused significant damage, including the collapse of a 17-storey apartment building. The earthquake killed more than 100 people and injured hundreds more.

I want to commend all the rescuers for their extraordinary efforts, especially their work to rescue those who were trapped when the building collapsed. Through their efforts, hundreds of people, including a number of children, were saved.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Taiwan and the families who have lost loved ones or have missing family members. We recognize the strength of the Taiwanese people and assure them that we will stand with them during their difficult time.

KINDNESS WEEK

SEMAINE DE BONTÉ

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: It's actually with great pleasure that I'm standing and rising today to recognize this week, Kindness Week. We should be kind every day to each other, but it's a special moment—

Interjection: Every day.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Every day. Yes, every day.

Rabbi Bulka introduced this notion in 2007, and actually, a year after, a motion by the great member from Ottawa Centre passed in the House in 2008. It's always the week after Family Day.

What's most important about Kindness Week is to recognize every single aspect of what human nature is all about. We are generally a kind people, but sometimes we forget to say nice things to each other. So I want to remind everyone in this House and across Ontario that this week is an important week.

We also have a member here, a person who's sitting in the gallery—I think he was introduced a little bit earlier—Jeff Turner from Kind Canada, who's promoting this same concept, especially for Canada 150. I want to recognize Mr. Turner for being here today. Thank you

very much, and thank you for all the work that you do for us in Ontario and across Canada.

Un petit mot en français : n'oublions pas d'être gentils l'un envers l'autre.

CLAUDETTE MILLER

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It is an honour for me to rise today on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge to pay tribute to Claudette Miller, who had a profound influence in establishing the city of Cambridge as a successful municipality. She passed away February 10 at the age of 81.

Elected as mayor of Preston in 1969, she was Canada's youngest mayor at a time when few women ran for public office. She became the first mayor of Cambridge when Galt, Preston and Hespeler amalgamated in 1973.

A year later, in 1974, Claudette shone as an outstanding leader when she helped manage a major flood, gaining national attention. In 1986, Miller successfully wooed Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada to Cambridge, which became an award-winning plant and major employer. It was a very, very important step in securing our future.

At her induction into the Waterloo Region Hall of Fame in 2015, she said that these two were her proudest accomplishments.

She retired as a regional councillor in 2014. Tributes from friends and colleagues have been pouring in. She was known as a feisty, driven personality who was always working for the people of Cambridge and who smashed through the glass ceiling as if it wasn't there.

I will miss her incredibly sharp wit, her larger-than-life, dynamic personality and her strong mentorship in heritage and environmental issues. Claudette Miller leaves an incredible legacy. Truly, Cambridge has lost one of its greats.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

ANNUAL REPORT, OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that during adjournment, the following report was tabled on December 16, 2015: the annual report 2014-15 on the Open Meeting Law Enforcement Team, OMLET, from the Ombudsman.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, our Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated January 27, 2016, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 108(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I also beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated February 16, 2016, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 108(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Speaker, I beg leave to present a report on e-petitions from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: This report is the culmination of 10 months of work by the committee. At its core is a recommendation that an e-petition system be adopted by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It is the committee's hope that this will expand public participation in the parliamentary process.

As Chair of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, I want to thank the members of the committee for their dedication to this important project. Members of all parties were very engaged, and we had some excellent discussions at our meetings. I'd also like to thank all those who provided testimony to the committee, including the Clerk and Deputy Clerk of the Legislature.

Last but not least, I want to thank the staff of the committee and take this opportunity to acknowledge the excellent work of our table research clerk, Joanne McNair.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. No further action.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SAVING THE GIRL NEXT DOOR ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA SAUVEGARDE DES JEUNES FILLES

Ms. Scott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 158, An Act to enact the Human Trafficking Awareness Day Act, 2016 and the Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act, 2016 and to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / *Projet de loi 158, Loi édictant la Loi de 2016 sur la Journée de sensibilisation à la traite de personnes et la Loi de 2016 sur l'exploitation sexuelle d'enfants et la traite de personnes et modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Human trafficking is an evil practice in our society that can no longer be kept secret. It's right here in our neighbourhoods and our towns, and we know that it's a crime that starts and stays in Canada. It must be stopped.

1520

The girl next door represents the victims, mostly females, who are recruited on average by age 14—some as young as 11. They are strategically lured into a world that they can almost never escape on their own.

The Saving the Girl Next Door Act, 2016, marks some good collaborative work that is meant to spark a long line of discussion, consultation, collaboration and legislation needed to combat this heinous crime, a form of modern-day slavery. The bill addresses significant steps that can be done within our power immediately that just may save the next innocent soul before they become a statistic.

STEPHANIE HOLDINGS LTD. ACT, 2016

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr33, An Act to revive Stephanie Holdings Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE MOIS DE L'HISTOIRE DES NOIRS

Mr. Coteau moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 159, An Act to proclaim the month of February as Black History Month / *Projet de loi 159, Loi proclamant le mois de février Mois de l'histoire des Noirs.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Michael Coteau: The proposed legislation being introduced today would, if passed, enact the Black

History Month Act, 2016. The proposed legislation would formally establish February as Black History Month in Ontario on an annual basis. If passed, this legislation would recognize and celebrate the important contributions that black Canadians have had in the history of this province.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank stakeholders joining us here today: Pauline Christian from the BBPA; Rosemary Sadlier, the past president of the Ontario Black History Society; Kofi Hope; Pastor Searles; and many other community members joining us here today. I want to thank them for their continuous work on this file and their contributions to Ontario.

BILL BEDFORD PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION ACT, 2016

Mr. Brown moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr34, An Act to revive Bill Bedford Professional Corporation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

839255 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2016

Ms. Wong moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr36, An Act to revive 839255 Ontario Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

LIFE LEASE ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LES BAUX VIAGERS

Ms. Hoggarth moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 160, An Act to regulate life leases / *Projet de loi 160, Loi visant à réglementer les baux viagers.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: As you may know, life lease housing is not legislated in the province of Ontario. This will be the first legislation of its kind and it aims to give basic protection to the people who live in life lease housing.

I hope everyone in this Legislature will support this bill and help give those who need it the protections that they deserve.

ELIMINATION OF GROUND CURRENT POLLUTION ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR L'ÉLIMINATION DE L'ÉLECTROPOLLUTION DU SOL

Mr. Nicholls moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 161, An Act to prohibit harmful electrical ground current / Projet de loi 161, Loi interdisant les courants électriques telluriques nuisibles.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: The bill prohibits electricity providers from causing occurrence of objectionable current flow, which is commonly and erroneously known as stray voltage or tingle voltage. The scientifically correct term is “ground current” or “uncontrolled electricity.”

Electrical current flow is objectionable if it is a steady flow of alternating electrical current in the ground or on a grounding conductor or any other conductor that is not designed to carry electrical current. It does not include any temporary flow of electrical current that is caused by a phase-to-ground fault condition and that results from the performance of a grounding conductor’s protective functions regarding faults or lightning.

An electricity provider that receives a complaint about objectionable current flow is required to have the complaint investigated. The person or entity doing the investigation is required to report to the provider and the complainant. Either party who disagrees with the findings of the report can request a further investigation. If the applicable investigation shows that the provider is responsible for an occurrence of objectionable current flow, the provider is required, within five months of receiving the report, to take all necessary steps to eliminate the objectionable current flow and to prevent a recurrence. It is an offence for a provider to fail to do so.

Lastly, Speaker, the government of Ontario has two years from the date on which the bill receives royal assent to develop a plan to eliminate objectionable current flow in Ontario and has 10 years from that date to implement the plan throughout Ontario.

1709542 ONTARIO CORPORATION ACT, 2016

Mr. Ballard moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr35, An Act to revive 1709542 Ontario Corporation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

BASE2 EBUSINESS SOLUTIONS INC. ACT, 2016

Mr. Dong moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr37, An Act to revive Base2 eBusiness Solutions Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

Introduction of bills? Introduction of bills? Last call for introductions of bills.

Today I’m going to check with the Guinness people to find out if it’s a record for introducing bills the first day back.

1530

MOTIONS

APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the appointment of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the appointment of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. Do we agree? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

“We, Her Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the appointment of Dr. David Williams as Chief Medical Officer of Health for the province of Ontario as provided in section 81(1) of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, 1990, to hold office under the terms and conditions of the said act, commencing February 16, 2016.”

And that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader moves that an humble address be—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.

Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY OMBUDSMAN

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice

regarding the appointment of the temporary Ombudsman for the province of Ontario.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion—I'm not that rusty—without notice regarding the appointment of the temporary Ombudsman for the province of Ontario. Do we agree? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the reappointment of Barbara Finlay as the temporary Ombudsman for the province of Ontario as provided in section 7 of the Ombudsman Act, to hold office under the terms and conditions of the said act, commencing March 16, 2016 until March 31, 2016."

And that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader moves that an humble address be presented—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.

Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

APPOINTMENT OF OMBUDSMAN

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the appointment of the Ombudsman for the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the appointment of the Ombudsman for the province of Ontario. Do we agree? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the appointment of Paul Dubé as the Ombudsman for the province of Ontario as provided in section 3 of Ombudsman Act, to hold office under the terms and conditions of the said act, commencing on April 1, 2016."

And that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader moves that an humble address be presented—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we dispense? Dispense.

Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business. Do we agree? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following changes be made to the ballot list: Mr. Crack and Mr. Potts exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Crack assumes ballot item number 33 and Mr. Potts assumes ballot item number 21; and that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 17, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following changes be made to the ballot list: Mr. Crack and Mr. Potts exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Crack assumes ballot item number 33—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispensed.

Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that, notwithstanding standing orders 71(a) and 81(b), the order for second reading of Bill 159, An Act to proclaim the month of February as Black History Month, may be called today; and

That up to 30 minutes shall be allotted to the second reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties, at the end of which time the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill; and

That the order for third reading of Bill 159 be immediately called; and

That the question be put on the motion for third meeting without debate or amendment; and

That the votes on second and third reading may not be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader has put forward—are we asking for unanimous consent first?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We just had it. Okay. Got it.

I believe you will find—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispensed.

Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I just want to rise and say it's rather unfortunate that the government House leader used the names in the order that he presented on this particular motion. It would have been much more fitting for him to name the learned member Mr. Potts before Mr. Crack in order to deal with this motion, because otherwise what is he saying about Mr. Crack and Mr. Potts when he puts it in that order?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would leave that point of order to be figured out by all of the learned members in this House. I will not say anything further.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm happy today to rise to celebrate an important milestone. On January 17 of this year, the Ministry of Transportation turned 100 years old.

Applause.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Absolutely, absolutely

Historically, of course, the word “milestone” refers to concrete markers that were placed along the roadway to reassure travellers; to let them know how far they had come and how far they still had to go. Though we use the term “milestone” somewhat figuratively today, it's very appropriate for MTO's 100th because this milestone anniversary gives us all a chance to pause and to reflect on our past so that we can see how far we have come and also look ahead to our future, to think about where we're going and how we are going to get there, and also to think a little bit about the legacy that we're going to leave behind. I'd like to talk to you about our plans for that legacy, but before I look ahead, I want to reflect for just a moment as to the MTO's history and achievements.

One hundred years ago, the Department of Public Highways of Ontario, as the ministry was then called, managed almost 3,000 kilometres of provincial highway. Today, the Ministry of Transportation is responsible for almost 17,000 kilometres of provincial highway.

Over the years, MTO has successfully created a vital, multi-modal transportation system that spans the entire

province, a province that is in fact larger than some countries.

The ministry developed regional rail and public transit systems like GO Transit and the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. It helped build 29 remote airports and connect island communities by launching all-year ferry systems like the Glenora ferry service. It introduced #CycleON, a forward-looking cycling strategy to support and encourage cycling here in our province.

1540

MTO has turned a province that at one time was largely populated by dirt roads into one of the largest and safest road networks in the world, by being the first province in Canada to make seat belts mandatory in 1976; by making child booster seats mandatory; by having one of the strictest impaired-driving legislation regimes in Canada; and of course, Speaker, by banning handheld devices while driving. I'm also very proud to point out that we've been at the forefront of innovation with things like advanced bridge replacement technology and the Highway 401 COMPASS Freeway Traffic Management System.

Speaker, looking forward, our legacy will include the commitment to build and to continue to build a seamless transportation network. Our government's Moving Ontario Forward plan commits \$31.5 billion over the next 10 years for priority transit and transportation infrastructure: projects across the province such as public transit, roads, bridges and highways. Our legacy will be built upon a solid foundation of transportation safety.

Just last year, MTO was instrumental in terms of passing the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act to help ensure that this province's roads continue to rank amongst the safest in North America, by imposing even tougher penalties for distracted and impaired driving.

Finally, Speaker, we hope that today's MTO is remembered for embracing innovation. In 2015, MTO announced that it is investing \$20 million to build more public charging stations for electric vehicles, and early this year, Ontario became the first of Canada's provinces and territories to allow testing of automated vehicles on its roads.

As we celebrate 100 years of hard work and innovation, we should remind ourselves that our story is still being written. One hundred years from now, a future generation of Ontarians will proudly be remembering the initiatives that we are collectively working on together today.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank all past ministers of transportation and all current and former ministry staff for their dedication and hard work in helping to build one of the largest and safest transportation networks here in Canada and around the globe. I am proud to serve as Ontario's Minister of Transportation for the people of this province, and I'm delighted to celebrate our 100th anniversary. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mr. Michael Harris: You know, Speaker, 100 years ago, when the Act Respecting Public Roads and Highways in Ontario came into effect and Findlay G. MacDiarmid was named the first minister of transportation, over the Department of Public Highways, no one could have imagined where those highways would take us. They just knew there was a role to play for government to help the people, workers and businesses of Ontario to get from point A to point B. That's really what the ministry has been about over those 100 years: getting from point A to point B.

Now, 100 years ago the options were somewhat limited. The automobile was just beginning to be enjoyed by a mass audience, driven by motorists who had never seen a traffic light, owned a driver's licence or even traversed a provincial highway. That's because there were no provincial highways.

A lot has changed in those years. Dirt and macadam roads have given way to an interconnected paved road and provincial highway system, north to south, west to east, that every resident in this great province depends upon for everything from their daily commute to critical emergency transport to the transfer of goods and resources vital to our everyday lives and our economic well-being.

While roads and bridges continued to improve and expand across the province in those early years as both population and technological advances moved forward, investments in rail and air provided further interconnectedness, giving commuters options in the south while providing vital airborne connections to remote airports in the north.

Soon after the ministry's birth, progress really began to get rolling in the next decade as the Roaring Twenties ushered in the first formal road systems, resulting in a total of just about 10,000 miles of county roads and 1,825 miles of provincial highways, the first provincial Highway Traffic Act and the first traffic lights introduced in Toronto and Hamilton.

As coloured safety signals expanded throughout every community in Ontario, the road network multiplied as well, connecting us from one corner of the province to the other. That network saw one of its crowning early achievements toward the end of the Great Depression as King George VI and Queen Elizabeth helped to welcome the 1939 unveiling of the Queen Elizabeth Way in St. Catharines, becoming the first intercity divided highway in Canada, featuring the first cloverleaf interchange in our country, at Highway 10.

While the divided highways and cloverleaf interchanges would become commonplace as road-building pushed us forward, the ministry continued to look to other opportunities to get our people and goods moving right across the province. To that end, it was Progressive Conservative John Robarts's government that planted the seeds for a GO Transit initiative along the lakeshore between Oakville and Toronto. It was 5:50 a.m. on May 23, 1967, that the first GO train trip was taken. While not yet at the two-way, all-day frequency that many areas are

still waiting for this government to deliver on, trains soon began operating between Oakville and Dunbarton, also known now as Pickering, with rush-hour service between Hamilton and Pickering at 14 stations on 94 kilometres of track. On the first day, the system carried 8,000 riders, and in that first year, some 2.5 million people used the service, with millions more set to line up over the coming decades as GO trains and the soon-to-follow GO bus service helped meet consumer demands for transportation options.

While the overriding goal has been to oversee provincial initiatives and investments that ultimately help people get from A to B, the ministry has understood that its success at achieving that goal is wasted if it can't ensure that people can make that trip safely. So while better and newer technology has been introduced on roadways and automobiles to enhance safety, the ministry has worked to implement safety-based initiatives aimed at curbing the frequency and/or impact of accidents.

From speed reductions to paved shoulders, there has probably been no more impactful initiative to promote safety than the introduction of seat belt laws under the Bill Davis government in 1976. By the end of the year that the new seat belt laws came into effect, traffic-related deaths dropped to their lowest level in more than a decade. That was 40 years ago; imagine the number of lives that have been saved or protected in those four decades.

In our lifetimes, we have all seen the Ministry of Transportation continue to move us forward through highway expansion, essential bridge work and continue to pursue advances in technology that provide new and safer transportation options that we all need to get us from point A to B. While we could never have imagined the continued progress we would take on as a province over the past century, there is little doubt that the ministry has accomplished much to be proud of in pursuing the dual goals of pushing Ontario forward, whether that be on wheels, water or air, while overseeing safety for all who travel in and around our province.

So I join people across the province in recognizing the achievements made over 100 years of MTO in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm very pleased to rise today and speak about the 100th anniversary of the Ministry of Transportation. When the MTO was first formed in 1916, it was known as the Department of Public Highways of Ontario, or the DPHO. The DPHO had 35 staff and exactly zero kilometres of provincial highway to oversee. That's right: When it was formed, Ontario had 90,000 kilometres of dirt and gravel roadway, along which 54,000 registered vehicles travelled, and none of it was considered a public highway.

You may ask yourself: Why was the Department of Public Highways of Ontario created if there were no public highways? The answer to that question is, unfortunately, a problem that we're still dealing with today: gridlock. More specifically, it was formed as part of the

response to a request from the municipalities of Hamilton, Burlington, Nelson and Oakville. These municipalities got together and asked the government of Ontario to build Ontario's first public highway, running between Hamilton and Toronto, and to help get rid of bumper-to-bumper traffic on Lakeshore Road.

The DPHO did just that. In April 1917, a little less than 18 months after it was formed, the DPHO officially opened the Toronto-Hamilton highway to the public. The highway would go on to serve as a prominent figure in developing southern Ontario, including my riding of Niagara Falls.

1550

I wanted to tell you that little story because it has some shocking parallels to the world we live in today. In today's world, the drivers of Ontario still face massive gridlock when they try to drive from Niagara Falls to Toronto through Hamilton. The drivers of Oakville and Burlington still have to crawl in bumper-to-bumper traffic to get to downtown Toronto. All of this is far too close for comfort to the truths of today, given how long ago those problems started and are still happening today.

In the last month, St. Catharines—I know Mr. Bradley would like to hear this—Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake and the rest of the municipalities in Niagara region came to the government of Ontario and the MTO to ask for a solution to some of the gridlock that costs our economy \$6 billion a year.

In 2016, when municipalities from the Niagara region come to the government of Ontario and the MTO, they aren't requesting another highway. Instead, Niagara regional municipalities are simply requesting a timeline for when they can expect the expansion of GO train service to Niagara Falls. Unfortunately, these municipalities are having to wait a lot longer than the 18 months the original five municipalities waited 100 years ago.

Of course, over the last 100 years, the Minister of Transportation has taken on many other roles as the transportation needs of Ontario have changed. In the 1920s, the first Highway Traffic Act was passed and beginner permits were made available to Ontario's young people.

In the 1930s, the Nipigon River bridge was opened as the only paved route linking eastern and western Canada. Unfortunately for the ministry, that is not currently the case; I'm sure we're all aware of that.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Tell us more.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm going to.

In the 1970s, we saw seat belt laws come into effect, the first commuter parking lot opened and, very importantly in my opinion, the option to customize your own licence plate was introduced as well. I have one myself. It was a birthday present from a year that I won't mention.

Over the 35 years after the 1970s, the MTO would continue to expand and, in many cases, enhance transportation across Ontario. Of course, not everything they did has been successful. We still have gridlock problems, and are having more trouble resolving them

than 100 years ago. There are still problems keeping our roads clear and clean, especially in the winter. In fact, there are even problems with contractors as well.

While I stand today to offer my congratulations to the MTO for 100 years of service, I would also like to offer some advice: Use this opportunity to look back and learn. Learn from our past successes but, more importantly, from our past mistakes. Let's learn, and let's move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the price of electricity has skyrocketed under the Ontario Liberal government;

"Whereas ever-higher hydro bills are a huge concern for everyone in the province, especially seniors and others on fixed incomes, who can't afford to pay more;

"Whereas Ontario's businesses say high electricity costs are making them uncompetitive, and have contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs;

"Whereas the recent Auditor General's report found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional \$133 billion over the next 18 years if nothing changes;

"Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff (FIT) contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the debt retirement charge, the global adjustment and smart meters that haven't met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

"Whereas the sale of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and will likely only lead to even higher hydro bills;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To listen to Ontarians, reverse course on the Liberal government's current hydro policies and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills."

Mr. Speaker, this has been signed by a substantial number of my constituents, and I am pleased to support it as well.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I've been reading this petition for seven years. You'll hear why.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I couldn't agree more. It's pretty obvious why we have this petition. I'm going to give it to Charlotte to be delivered to the table.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I'm pleased to affix my signature, and I'll send it to the table with page Micah.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Mr. Fred and Mrs. Millie Grosklag from Richmond Avenue in Sudbury. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" to:

"Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Ryan to deliver it to the Clerk.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition here for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by numerous residents of the town of Clarington from the fantastic member for Durham's fine riding.

"Whereas the residents of the municipality of Clarington have been promised that the GO train would be extended to Courtice and Bowmanville;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario keep its promise to Clarington residents and commit to providing the necessary funding for Metrolinx to complete the extension of the GO train to Courtice and Bowmanville no later than 2018."

I fully support this petition because those people will be coming through my riding of Beaches–East York and getting off the GO train and going onto the subway system.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Soliris for patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome (aHUS), an ultra-rare, chronic and life-threatening genetic condition that progressively damages vital organs, leading to heart attack, stroke and kidney failure; and

"Whereas Soliris, the first and only pharmaceutical treatment in Canada for the treatment of aHUS, has allowed patients to discontinue plasma and dialysis therapies, and has been shown to improve kidney function and enable successful kidney transplant; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Soliris is especially burdensome on the families of Ontario children and adults battling this catastrophic disease;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Instruct the Ontario government to immediately provide Soliris as a choice to patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I will affix my signature to this petition and send it to the table.

1600

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Wayne Gates: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I agree with this petition and I’ll sign my name.

EHLERS-DANLOS SYNDROME

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Canada Health Act requires provinces to fund medically necessary treatment for Canadians; and

“Whereas a growing number of people in Ontario suffering from Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (EDS) have to seek out-of-country treatment at their own expense because doctors in Ontario don’t have the knowledge or skills to understand EDS symptoms and perform the required delicate and complicated surgeries; and

“Whereas those EDS victims who can’t afford the expensive treatment outside of Ontario are forced to suffer a deteriorating existence and risk irreversible tissue and nerve damage; and

“Whereas EDS victims suffer severe dislocations, chronic pain, blackouts, nausea, migraines, lost vision, tremors, bowel and bladder issues, heart problems, mobility issues, digestive disorders, severe fatigue and many others resulting in little or very poor quality of life; and

“Whereas despite Ontario Ministry of Health claims that there are doctors in Ontario who can perform surgeries on EDS patients, when surgery is recommended the Ontario referring physicians fail to identify any Ontario neurosurgeon willing or able to see and treat the patient;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Require the Minister of Health to provide the names of Ontario neurosurgeons who can—and will—perform surgeries on EDS patients with equivalent or identical

skills to the EDS neurosurgeon specialists in the United States, and meet the Canada Health Act’s requirement to afford equal access to medical treatment for patients, regardless of their ability to pay for out-of-country services.”

I’m pleased to support the petition, affix my signature and send it to the table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a petition from the constituents in my riding of Windsor West.

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I fully support this petition. I will sign my name to it and send it to the table with page Micah.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I’m pleased to present this petition on behalf of a number of people from the area. I’m pleased to see them raise their voice. To that end, here is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with Sarah.

MISSING PERSONS

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario does not have missing persons legislation; and

"Whereas police are not able to conduct a thorough investigation upon receipt of a missing person report where criminal activity is not considered the cause; and

"Whereas this impedes investigators in determining the status and possibly the location of missing persons; and

"Whereas this legislation exists and is effective in other provinces; and

"Whereas negotiating rights to safety that do not violate rights to privacy has been a challenge in establishing missing persons law;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the Attorney General's office work with the office of the privacy commissioner to implement missing persons legislation that grants investigators the opportunity to apply for permissions to access information that will assist in determining the safety or whereabouts of missing persons for whom criminal activity is not considered the cause."

Can we please get this done? Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send the petition to the table with page Delaney.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have a petition for better mental health services.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas mental health affects people of all ages, educational and income levels, and cultures; and

"Whereas one in five Canadians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime and only one third of those who need mental health services in Canada actually receive them; and

"Whereas mental health is the second leading cause of human disability and premature death in Canada; and

"Whereas the cost of mental health and addictions to the Ontario economy is \$34 billion; and

"Whereas the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions made 22 recommendations in their final report; and

"Whereas the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, 2015, seeks to implement all 22 of these recommendations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, 2015, which:

"(1) Brings all mental health services in the province under one ministry, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

"(2) Establishes a single body to design, manage and coordinate all mental health and addictions systems throughout the province;

"(3) Ensures that programs and services are delivered consistently and comprehensively across Ontario;

"(4) Grants the Ombudsman full powers to audit or investigate providers of mental health and addictions services in Ontario."

Speaker, I wholeheartedly sign and support this petition and give it to page Erin to deliver to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BLACK HISTORY MONTH ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE MOIS DE L'HISTOIRE DES NOIRS

Mr. Coteau moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 159, An Act to proclaim the month of February as Black History Month / Projet de loi 159, Loi proclamant le mois de février Mois de l'histoire des Noirs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Coteau.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am so proud to be here today for second reading of Bill 159, the act to make Black History Month official here in the province of Ontario. I will be sharing my time with MPP Mitzie Hunter from Scarborough—

Guildwood and with Bas Balkissoon, the MPP for Scarborough–Rouge River.

1610

I wanted to acknowledge first that we're on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit. I also wanted to acknowledge that we do have some special guests here today, and I did mention some names before, but there are a few more people here and I'll just mention everyone.

We have Nikki Clarke, who is from the Ontario Black History Society; Pauline Christian—I introduced her earlier; Rosemary Sadlier; Kofi Hope; Grant Morris; Gwyn Chapman; and Pastor Searles and his wife, Janice. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature, and if I missed anyone, I'm so sorry. Welcome, everyone, here. I'm delighted that members from the community are joining us here for the second reading of this important bill.

I wanted to also acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that back in 2007 and in 2009, the member for Scarborough–Rouge River, Bas Balkissoon, actually brought forward a proposed bill to recognize Black History Month formally. I just want to say thank you to him for his work and advocacy on behalf of the community and Ontarians.

Twenty-three years ago, Ontario first proclaimed Black History Month here in the province of Ontario. It was on the 200th anniversary of the law banning the importation of slaves into Upper Canada, and every year since then we have recognized Black History Month here in the Ontario Legislature. This process, if passed, will formally recognize it on an ongoing basis so we don't have to come into the Legislature each year to proclaim it.

I wanted to just take a few minutes, because I will be sharing my time, to say how proud I am to be a black Canadian, a black Ontarian. I know that many people know the stories in the past of the contribution of black people here in the province of Ontario.

You know, when I think of those great stories, I always talk about interesting people like William Hubbard, a former politician here in the city of Toronto. These are not the kind of stories that I received in my education here in Toronto. In fact, I was asking some of my colleagues around me if any of them had black history taught at school, and no one responded yes. So I think that by having Black History Month—and I need to thank the Honourable Jean Augustine for her work in bringing this forward back in 1995 federally; we're proud of the work that she's done. But going back to my point, there are so many wonderful stories about people like William Hubbard, stories that are just incredible. I don't know if the member from St. Catharines knows this, but William Hubbard actually saved George Brown's life. He was in the Don River, he was drowning, and William Hubbard, this young man, saved his life. He became somewhat of a protégé to George Brown, the abolitionist and founding father, and he worked and became the first black city councillor and the first black acting mayor of Toronto 115 years ago.

That's the type of rich history that we have here in the province of Ontario. I know that the Ontario Black Hist-

ory Society, some of our educators and different organizations are constantly getting out there so that people understand that since the very beginning of this country and its past 400 years ago, there has been a black African presence in this country. We need to continue to tell those stories so that we can continue to grow as a province and as a country.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I am honoured to rise in this House to speak on behalf of the people of Wellington–Halton Hills and on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus. This Bill 159, the Black History Month Act, is an important one because it enshrines in statute for all time the Legislative Assembly of Ontario's recognition of the month of February as Black History Month. This act of Parliament gives Black History Month the distinction it deserves.

On the evening of February 2, earlier this month, the Leader of the Opposition, my colleague the member for Simcoe North, hosted a very successful reception here at Queen's Park to kick off our Black History Month recognition. I was glad to be there to welcome our guests, and it was great: interesting conversations, good food and wonderful fellowship. I want to thank everyone who joined us, and I hope we can turn this into an annual event.

Earlier this month, I also had the opportunity to visit Father Henry Carr Catholic Secondary School in Etobicoke, home of one of the top-ranked high school basketball teams in Toronto, the Carr Crusaders. I met with senior staff and some of the students and learned about an extraordinary youth community support program called Trust 15. Founded by Marcia Brown, Trust 15 is a not-for-profit organization that provides youth in the Rexdale–North Etobicoke area with programs that promote and facilitate positive behaviour, creative expression and co-operative working skills. These programs exist to give kids the social and educational tools they need to succeed in society. This is accomplished through mentoring and positive role model intervention.

Every week, Trust 15 opens its doors to 120 youth in the community through their Ladies on the Rise, Girls on the Rise and Men of Distinction after-school drop-in programs. They provide safe, nurturing space for these young people to discuss and find solutions for real-life issues surrounding self-esteem, conflict resolution, abuse, violence, peer pressure and family life.

It goes without saying that Ontario's black community has a long and proud history in our province. In fact, black history is Ontario history. The two are inextricably linked. The Ontario Black History Society reminds us that black Canadians fought valiantly alongside English, French and aboriginal Canadians in the War of 1812, including in the Battle of Queenston Heights and the Battle of Lundy's Lane.

Thousands of escaped slaves fleeing the oppression and scourge of slavery in the southern United States

arrived in Ontario via the Underground Railroad. They established early settlements in towns such as Windsor, Chatham, Guelph and St. Catharines, as well as Owen Sound.

I was reminded today by my colleague the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound that Owen Sound was the most northerly point for the Underground Railway, offering refuge for the slaves fleeing from the southern states. To mark this part of its heritage, Owen Sound has celebrated Emancipation Day every August 1 for the past 182 years to recognize and celebrate those individuals and groups who made the Underground Railroad journey possible and to remind our young people of this important story.

Fleeing the United States, they became Canadians and raised their families in freedom. They and their descendants went on to become farmers, teachers, business owners, doctors, and lawyers. Their contributions were fundamental in helping to build the Ontario that we know and celebrate today.

Today, I want to highlight the outstanding contributions of two particular black Canadians: Richard Pierpoint and Lincoln Alexander.

Historica Canada, Canada's largest independent organization devoted to enhancing awareness of Canadian history and citizenship, recognizes the story of Richard Pierpoint, whose long life straddled the 18th and 19th centuries and included a chapter in what is now Wellington–Halton Hills, and whose courage, public service and insistence that blacks should be treated fairly and equally should inspire us all. This is how they relate the historical importance of Richard Pierpoint:

“Richard Pierpoint was born in Bondou (now Senegal) in 1744. In 1760, he was captured and brought to America where he was sold” as a slave “to a British officer. After more than 20 years in America, he won his emancipation by fighting as a member of Butler’s Rangers in the American Revolution.

“His support for the British in the conflict meant he was rewarded with a land grant in the Niagara region. After 1783, Pierpoint settled in Niagara, where he served as a griot (storyteller) for the local black community. In the Senegalese tradition a griot listens to stories and associates them with a particular stone. The griot retells the stories by pulling a stone out of his bag and recounting the associated story. Before and after the War of 1812, Pierpoint travelled around Upper Canada listening to and retelling the stories of the black community.

“In 1794, Pierpoint and a number of formerly enslaved men petitioned the government of Upper Canada to grant them land adjacent to each other rather than dispersed among white settlers. The Petition of Free Negroes, as it was known, aimed to create a black community where members would help and support each other....

“In the War of 1812, at age 68, Pierpoint petitioned the military for the creation of an all-black unit, by producing a list of black men in the region who had sworn to fight. The petition was initially rejected, but leadership of the unit was eventually given to Captain

Robert Runchey, and the unit was named Captain Runchey’s Corps of Coloured Men. The Corps fought at Queenston Heights on October 13, 1812 (they were among the first reinforcements to arrive on the Heights in support of Mohawk Chief John Norton’s Grand River warriors)....

“These courageous men were instrumental to the war effort throughout the Niagara region. In 1813, they were reassigned to the Provincial Corps of Artificers and served throughout the war, building and rebuilding important strategic posts.

1620

“After the war, Pierpoint stayed in Niagara, but found life difficult. In 1821, Pierpoint petitioned the government again, this time asking to be sent back on a ship to his homeland in Senegal. Pierpoint’s petition was again rejected, but he was given a new land grant in Garafraxa, near modern-day Fergus. He took up his land and became a leader in the black community, helping formerly enslaved men and women move through the Underground Railroad. In addition, Scottish settlers, in particular James Webster—who is commonly understood to be one of the founders of the community of Fergus—relied on Pierpoint for help when they arrived in the Fergus area in the early 1830s. Pierpoint died around 1837, aged about 93. He was one of the thousands of black Loyalists who came to Canada after the American Revolution, and while many faced significant hardships, they nonetheless formed an important part of early Canada.”

In October 2012, Canada mourned the loss of Lincoln Alexander, one of our greatest Canadians, who made a meaningful and lasting contribution to both our province and our country. He was a man who shattered barriers and led the way for the next generation of leaders to follow in his footsteps.

Members will recall that in November 2013, we debated a bill, which I had introduced, that was co-sponsored by the member for Scarborough–Rouge River and the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek to recognize January 21 as Lincoln Alexander Day in Ontario. We worked together across party lines to secure the passage of the bill, and it was passed into law with the unanimous consent of this House.

Lincoln Alexander grew up in an Ontario that was far less tolerant and inclusive than the province we know today, but as Sandra Martin wrote in the *Globe and Mail* shortly after his death, he was a man who had the capacity to “turn rejections and despicable slurs into a personal challenge to excel.”

Lincoln Alexander was first elected to the House of Commons as a Progressive Conservative in 1968, becoming Canada’s first black member of Parliament in the House of Commons. He held his Hamilton riding through five consecutive elections and in 1979 was appointed Minister of Labour, earning the distinction of becoming Canada’s first black federal cabinet minister.

After he retired from partisan politics in 1980, he served as chair of Ontario’s Workmen’s Compensation Board, and later broke new ground by becoming

Canada's first black Lieutenant Governor when he was appointed Lieutenant Governor of Ontario in 1985. That was the position he held when I was first elected to the Legislative Assembly 25 years ago in 1990. When he came into this chamber for a throne speech or some other special occasion, he had a regal bearing and a manner that ironically seemed to be down to earth at the same time.

Lincoln Alexander inspired thousands of young Canadians with his life story and example of overcoming discrimination, pursuing excellence and working for a better Canada. He also served as the longest-serving chancellor in the history of the University of Guelph. He inspired a new generation of leaders who continue to help shape our country and our province today.

As some members of this House may remember, in 2008 I introduced another bill honouring the history of Ontario's black community, this one recognizing August 1 as Emancipation Day in Ontario. This was to commemorate the day in 1834 when slavery was abolished in Canada and throughout the British Empire. That bill also holds the distinction of being the very first bill ever introduced into this House to be jointly sponsored by members from different parties. I had approached then-Lambton-Kent-Middlesex MPP Maria Van Bommel, and she graciously agreed to work with me on the bill.

The idea for the bill was brought to my attention at a ceremony that I had attended in the community of Glen Allen and Mapleton township in Wellington county in 2008 to unveil a plaque commemorating the Queen's Bush settlement, which had once been a thriving community of more than 1,500 people who had escaped slavery in the southern United States and made their way to our part of Ontario in the 19th century. As I was leaving the ceremony that day, a man whom I had never met before approached me. He told me that he thought there should be a bill in the Legislature recognizing August 1 of every year as Emancipation Day in Ontario.

As I was driving home, I kept thinking about what he had said. Shortly afterwards, as a result of that conversation, we asked legislative counsel to draft the legislation that was eventually passed into law by this House, with support from all three parties.

While working on this bill, I had the opportunity to get to know Rosemary Sadlier, who was then the president of the Ontario Black History Society. I want to acknowledge her extraordinary leadership in this province. Rosemary served the society for more than 20 years as president. Through my involvement in a number of legislative initiatives to recognize significant turning points in black history, I have come to know Rosemary very well. A teacher, Rosemary has received numerous awards, including the province's highest honour, the Order of Ontario.

As she wrote in an essay published on the Ontario Black History Society website, the annual observation of black history is important for young African Canadians, who "need to feel affirmed ... be aware of the contributions made by other blacks in Canada ... have role models

[and] understand the social forces which have shaped and influenced their community."

In the same essay, she argued that Black History Month is also important for helping the wider community get a clearer perception of their culture. "One needs traditional history to engender a common culture; one needs black history to engender a clearer and more complete culture," she wrote.

Rosemary has spent countless hours volunteering with the society, because she firmly believes in the importance of educating Ontarians about the history and significant achievements of the black community in building our communities, our provinces and our country. This is a chapter of our history that should make all of us very proud.

I want to express my sincere thanks to everyone who is involved with the Ontario Black History Society: their new chair, Nikki Clarke, the other members of the board and the many volunteers who have worked so hard to promote this important part of our past.

Black History Month is an opportunity to pay tribute to the legacy of countless individuals, including Richard Pierpoint, Lincoln Alexander and all the rest, and the lasting contributions they have made to our province and our country.

It should come as no surprise to members that this bill has our unqualified support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On behalf of the Ontario NDP caucus, it is my pleasure to rise to speak to the Black History Month Act.

Black History Month is a crucial opportunity to honour the people and the movements that have shaped positive and transformative change in our province, across our country and around the world. It is a time to celebrate more than 400 years of rich African- and Caribbean-Canadian history and to recognize the black community's tremendous accomplishments and achievements. Today, New Democrats join with members from all parties to celebrate the vital contributions of the black community in Ontario.

There are inspiring events happening in communities across this province to mark Black History Month, and I encourage all Ontarians to take part. At the same time, marking Black History Month also demands that we take a hard look at the history of our own province.

In pre-Confederation Canada, slavery existed. Of course, it was eventually outlawed, generations too late, but it was the first sign that racism and discrimination against African and Caribbean Canadians would come to shape the lives of far too many people in this country and this province.

So, along with the achievements and accomplishments that we honour during Black History Month, we must also acknowledge the pain, suffering and injustice that black Ontarians have endured, and the sacrifices that have been made by untold women and men in Ontario. But perhaps most importantly, it would be a mistake and

a lost opportunity to think that Black History Month is only about the past. In fact, Black History Month is as much about the present and the future: a better future that we are determined to build together.

Today, we must recognize that inequality and injustice continue to exist in this province, and that anti-black racism is still a reality here in Ontario. It takes different forms, but it hurts people; it hurts families; it hurts our province. Sometimes anti-black racism is overt; sometimes not. Sometimes it is confronted; all too often, it is excused. But no matter what it looks like and no matter what it sounds like, racism is always unacceptable, and it needs to be stopped.

Before I was elected, I had the opportunity to work with our community legal clinic in Hamilton. Everyone who came through the doors of that clinic needed help with the struggles they were facing, whether it was the impact of poverty, environmental concerns, work-related injuries or problems with their housing. More often than not, the people who came through our doors were living every day with the impact of racism. Years later, too many African and Caribbean Canadians in Ontario continue to face the same discrimination. That's the reality.

1630

The government has a duty to acknowledge the persistence of anti-black racism in our province. And we all have a duty to take real action, in full consultation and partnership with the African-Canadian and Caribbean-Canadian communities, to eliminate racism in all its forms.

We cannot simply accept that black families in Ontario should continue to be so much more likely to live in poverty. According to the African Canadian Legal Clinic, fully two thirds of African Canadian families in Toronto live below the poverty line.

We cannot simply accept that black children should be far more likely to be in the care of children's aid. An estimated 42% of children in care in Toronto are black.

We cannot accept that any policy should be applied in an arbitrary or discriminatory manner. That's why this Legislature passed the motion last October, from the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton and the deputy leader of the NDP, to stop arbitrary police street checks—carding—in Ontario.

We cannot accept that black and aboriginal men and boys should be jailed disproportionately.

We cannot accept that black Ontarians should earn less and be more likely to be unemployed in Ontario.

We cannot simply accept that the barriers and struggles should be even greater for black women, black members of the LGBTQ community and black Ontarians with disabilities.

There are many dedicated and tireless Ontarians who do not accept these facts and do not accept that they should define our future. Those leaders, activists, organizers and ordinary citizens work hard to create positive change. Many of them are with us today, and I'm sure that many of them are watching this debate. Those leaders, those activists and those organizers work hard every day to make that change happen in this province.

But, frankly, there's more that the provincial government can do to help and to stand shoulder to shoulder in the fight against systemic racism and discrimination in Ontario.

That's why the Ontario NDP joined with the African Canadian Legal Clinic and numerous community groups to call on the government to re-establish an Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat, a body dedicated to working proactively to eliminate systemic discrimination here in Ontario. C'est le moment. Now is the time to take this important step.

We actually had an Anti-Racism Secretariat in this province in the early 1990s, under the last NDP government, and it did important work. Unfortunately, it was shut down by the following government, the Conservative government. Then, 10 years ago, the Ontario Human Rights Code was amended to call for the Anti-Racism Secretariat to be re-established.

Now, at long last, this morning the government indicated that they would move forward with this important initiative, and I'm glad. I am glad that the government is finally listening to the thousands of Ontarians from across this province who joined with us to call for action against racism. This is an initiative that is a decade overdue—some folks over there think it's a laughing matter; I do not. The establishment of an Anti-Racism Directorate is an important step towards building a future where no one is left behind and where all Ontarians can share in the opportunities that we create. This is a vision that Ontario's NDP will continue to push as the new legislative session begins.

I want to thank the many people who shared their experiences and stories with me:

—the U of T students who talked about streaming in school—still, in this day and age, streaming in school because of skin colour—about the lack of black professors and academic mentors they had in university, and about the daily micro-aggressions that they face in their lives because of the colour of their skin; and

—the agencies who shared stories of the support that they try to provide daily—like the woman in Hamilton who relayed the story of a black teenage boy who was walking on the sidewalk and was hurt and confused when the woman approaching him from the opposite direction clutched her purse to her chest and crossed the street rather than pass him on the sidewalk; like Rahim Thomas at a group called FYI in York South-Weston, who told me about being questioned by police just for sitting on a park bench even though the older white fellow on the next bench was not approached by police.

I want to thank the more than 7,000 Ontarians who have signed the petitions calling for re-establishment of the anti-racism secretariat, and I want to take a moment to thank the remarkable community leaders and organizations who have led this campaign with us. Together, we got results that we can be proud of, and together we're going to keep working to tackle racism, make life better for all Ontarians and eliminate systemic injustice in this province. That's exactly what Black History Month should compel all of us to do.

Yes, we should celebrate the tremendous achievements of African and Caribbean Canadians; my colleagues on both the government benches and the opposition benches have mentioned a number of them. We should take the time to learn more about our shared history and make sure that that shared history is embedded in our kids' school curriculum.

Most importantly, we should focus on the future we want to build in this province: a future in which we eliminate racism and discrimination in Ontario; a future in which the opportunities people have are no longer limited or defined by the colour of their skin or by where their family came from; a future in which Ontario is more fair, more equal, more just; a future where, when we talk about important issues like this, people actually have the courtesy to listen to one another, and where we can all share in the benefits this province has to offer.

Merci beaucoup; thank you very much. We support this legislation 100%, and look to do even more here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise in this House today and join my colleagues the honourable Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport and newly appointed minister responsible for the Anti-Racism Directorate, and MPP Balkissoon, to support of Bill 159 to formally designate February as Black History Month in Ontario on an annual basis.

I want to echo Minister Coteau in welcoming the special guests to Queen's Park as we debate this important legislation. Thank you all for your ongoing work for behalf of the black community here in Ontario. As an immigrant myself who came to this country at the age of four, I'm proud of the rich history of black Canadians and our stories that have helped to shape this great province and the country since its inception.

Last year, I travelled to Birchtown, Nova Scotia, and heard the stories of the black Loyalists who came to our shores in the 1700s. Black Canadians have had an important impact across all fields: in the arts, entertainment, sports, education, science, business, finance and, of course, politics. I stand here today, proud to represent the people of Scarborough-Guildwood, 14% of whom are of Caribbean descent. This is a community where I grew up and where I attended high school and university. It's an honour and a privilege to follow in the footsteps of those who committed their lives to public service: people like Lincoln Alexander, Leonard Braithwaite, Jean Augustine, Alvin Curling, Mary Anne Chambers, Margaret Best and Zanana Akande.

I can't overstate how critical it is for young people to have role models like these in the community. It is so important that they see themselves in all aspects of society. Role models inspire us all to do better, to take advantage of opportunities, to achieve our true potential and to ensure that others have those opportunities as well. They encourage us to believe in ourselves.

Last week, I visited Cedarbrae Collegiate Institute in my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood and met with the

Black Students' Association and their teacher, Winston McCallum. I was touched by their questions. Many of their questions were about how they could succeed: What are the opportunities that are out there for them? What I told them was that they can do anything—they could be anything—in Ontario. Speaker, I was elected on August 1, 2013, Emancipation Day. As members of this Legislature—as lawmakers—we have a responsibility to ensure that we're removing barriers and building a fair and inclusive society. Lincoln Alexander once said, "It is not your duty to be average. It is your duty to set a higher example for others to follow."

We look to our leaders as role models and examples of what black Canadians can achieve and have achieved. At the same time, we need to remember that black Ontarians travelled a long and often hard road to get their chance. Those who escaped slavery and found their way to Canada via the Underground Railroad still had to struggle for decades against segregation in education and in other areas of society. A recent *Historica Canada* video of Viola Desmond illustrates that a black woman could be arrested for just watching a movie in the wrong part of a theatre where blacks were not allowed in the 1940s.

1640

We also need to acknowledge that while we have made important progress, we have a long road ahead. We have more to do to uphold the values of tolerance, inclusivity and equality here in Ontario. As we embark on the UN decade for African people, we need to strive towards their goal of "working toward the full enjoyment of human rights, full participation in society for people of African descent, and toward better understanding of, and respect for, their culture and contributions to social development."

We need to remember that black people's struggles, dreams and achievements—past, present and still to come—are a vital and vibrant part of what makes us one Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: It is a pleasure of mine to add a few comments to those of the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport and my colleague from Scarborough-Guildwood. As the minister mentioned, I tabled bills in this House on two previous occasions, in 2007 and 2009, proposing that February be formally recognized as Black History Month in Ontario on an annual basis. I thank the minister for that acknowledgment.

I want to take this opportunity to call on all members of this House to acknowledge the significant contributions black Canadians have made to our province and our country over the many years of our history and to support this bill.

I stand here today representing Scarborough-Rouge River, a riding with a very diverse population. Many of my residents are of African descent, from the continent and other parts of the world, as well as the beautiful Caribbean islands. I am proud to serve a constituency once represented for two decades—and I repeat, two

decades—by the Honourable Alvin Curling. He was the first African Canadian appointed Speaker of this Legislature. When I succeeded Mr. Curling as MPP for Scarborough—Rouge River in 2005, I took over from a friend whose legacy cannot be replicated. His legacy needs to be remembered, along with the legacy of all black Canadians who have made and continue to make contributions to our great province and our country. It is a story that needs to be celebrated with the many other stories of black Canadians.

I would like to remind members of this House that only a few years ago, a motion was put forward by a member of the Toronto District School Board to get rid of Black History Month celebrations in their school. Hopefully, the action of this bill will never see that repeat itself, because that was one of the motivating factors for me bringing forward a piece of legislation. I never understood why we would deprive our children of learning about a significant part of our Ontario history. The many young black people in my riding need to know those of their race who came before them and who have made a contribution to our great province and country. That's something I said in this House six years ago, and it bears repeating.

The history of black Canadians and their struggles against slavery, racism, exclusion and inequality is a significant part of Ontario's history. Black History Month is exactly what the young people in my riding and the province need.

I hope all the members of this Legislature will support this piece of legislation. Hopefully, it being a government bill, I will finally be here to see it in legislation and enacted in Ontario, and the black community in our province can celebrate proudly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Coteau has moved second reading of Bill 159, An Act to proclaim the month of February as Black History Month. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH ACT, 2016
LOI DE 2016 SUR LE MOIS
DE L'HISTOIRE DES NOIRS

Mr. Coteau moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 159, An Act to proclaim the month of February as Black History Month / Projet de loi 159, Loi proclamant le mois de février Mois de l'histoire des Noirs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a

change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Madame Lalonde assumes ballot item number 25 and Ms. Vernile assumes ballot item number 63.

HEALTH INFORMATION
PROTECTION ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LA SANTÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 10, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 119, An Act to amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, to make certain related amendments and to repeal and replace the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, 2004 / Projet de loi 119, Loi visant à modifier la Loi de 2004 sur la protection des renseignements personnels sur la santé, à apporter certaines modifications connexes et à abroger et à remplacer la Loi de 2004 sur la protection des renseignements sur la qualité des soins.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'll be sharing my time with the member for Halton and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I will have a few words to offer on this legislation.

To begin with, the legislation is certainly designed to improve transparency and accountability within the health system. It requires custodians to report privacy breaches to the Information and Privacy Commissioner as well as to the regulatory colleges when breaches result in HR action. It removes the six-month limitation for the prosecution of offences and doubles the maximum fines for individuals to \$100,000 and organizations to \$500,000. It modernizes the definition of "privacy breach." It establishes rules and regulations for the shared EHR—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I'm having difficulty hearing the deputy House leader in his debate, so I would ask that conversations be kept to a minimum, please. Thank you very much.

Minister, back to you.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much.

I think we saw a high-profile case that took place. I won't get into the details of it, but a former mayor of Toronto—it was in the media that information about his personal privacy, in terms of the health care he was receiving and the circumstances he faced, became public as a result of someone leaking that information. That was totally inappropriate, and it has happened in other circumstances over the years. That is why it's necessary for this legislation.

It certainly strengthens the process to prosecute offences under PHIPA by removing the requirement that prosecutions must be commenced, as I mentioned, within

six months of the alleged privacy breach. That gives more time, in case someone wants to come forward at a future time.

I think the increases that I mentioned, from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for individuals breaching that confidentiality and from \$250,000 to \$500,000 for an organization, will be a deterrent to those who might be contemplating such action.

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It clarifies the authority under which health care providers may collect, use and disclose personal health information and electronic health records. I think we recognize that there has to be sharing of this information by appropriate professionals within the health care system. Everybody understands that.

Using electronic health records, which promise to make things better in the future in terms of health care—it's fine to have that, but we have to ensure there is confidentiality that is maintained, except in cases where it is necessary to have information go from one medical practitioner to another, for instance, so that the appropriate action can be taken to deal with the affliction that the patient is facing.

Last year, the Ministry of Health established a committee to review and provide advice on the implementation of the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, 2004, and related legislation. Earlier this year, the committee provided their recommendations on strengthening our culture of transparency and quality improvement in Ontario's health care system, and we want to thank the members of the committee who provided that advice. Again, they were people expert in the field, and the advice was accepted by the Ministry of Health and is contained within this legislation. The minister reviewed the report and, in fact, accepted all of the recommendations. He indicated that people deserve to know that they are protected by a health care system that is accountable, first of all, transparent second, and ensures the highest-quality care.

The minister continues to believe that the default in our health system should be disclosure and transparency whenever there's a question that arises in that regard. He indicated that he intended to introduce legislation that, if passed by this House, would affirm the right of patients to access information about their health care, and we see that now manifested in this particular piece of legislation that is being debated in the House this afternoon.

I can't anticipate how others in the Legislature will react to this. From time to time I try to guess what the opposition might have to say about legislation of this kind. I suspect, if I were taking a good guess, that in fact there would be some considerable support for this. There's always discussion of details, but I think that in principle we will see a good deal of support for legislation of this kind. It is one place where I think that all members of the House have encountered circumstances where they recognize a need for this legislation.

Ontario is carrying out a number of the recommendations of the expert committee to improve that trans-

parency in critical incidents. This includes ensuring that patients or their representatives are interviewed as part of a critical incident investigation and are informed of the cause of the incident if that cause happens to be known. Protecting patient privacy and strengthening transparency is part of our government's plan to build a better Ontario through its Patients First action plan for health care, which is providing patients with faster access to the right care, better home and community care, the information they need to stay healthy, and a health care system that is sustainable for generations to come. So I welcome this particular legislation.

I note that Brian Beamish, who is the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, had the following to say: "As the health care sector transitions to shared electronic health records, the privacy of patients and the confidentiality of their personal health information must be protected to ensure public confidence. I am pleased that the government is moving forward with necessary amendments to Ontario's health privacy legislation, which were developed in consultation with my office. The introduction of mandatory breach reporting to my office and strengthening the consequences for those who violate patient privacy will bring increased accountability and transparency as well as instill trust in the health system." That, of course, is Brian Beamish, the new Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, so I think that appears to be a very good endorsement.

I know that Angela Morin, co-chair of the QCIPA Review Committee and patient and family adviser at Kingston General Hospital, said: "I applaud the government's decision to accept the QCIPA Review Panel's recommendations. This will help promote a culture of continuous improvement in health care facilities across the province and will better inform patients and their families who have been affected by critical incidents."

I indicated that I wanted to share time with my two colleagues, the member for Halton and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, who will want to elaborate on this legislation, so I will yield the floor. I don't know whether you're going in a round or whether we're doing it all at once, but I know they will be agreeing to continue this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing the debate, I recognize the member from Halton.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and speak today on Bill 119, the Health Information Protection Act. As Minister Bradley said earlier, the Health Information Protection Act would amend existing legislation to protect the personal health information of patients. Some of these changes would include making it mandatory to report privacy breaches as defined in regulation; strengthening the process to prosecute offences under the Personal Health Information Protection Act by removing the requirement that prosecutions must be commenced within six months; and doubling the maximum fines for offences from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for individuals and from \$250,000 to \$500,000 for organizations.

In addition, the Health Information Protection Act would also update the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, or QCIPA, to help increase transparency and maintain quality in Ontario's health care system. If passed, this new bill would affirm the rights of patients to access information about their own health care, clarify that certain information and facts about critical incidents cannot be withheld from affected patients and their families, and require the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to review QCIPA every five years.

With these amendments introduced by the government in September, Ontario patients can be confident in the privacy of their health records. I'm sure that all of us here would be terribly upset if our health information or that of our loved ones became lost or stolen. If passed, Bill 119 would not only improve the safety and security of Ontario health records; it will also be a strong deterrent to anyone in a position to commit a privacy breach. Among other things, the amendments will make it mandatory to report certain breaches, remove any time limit for prosecutions and double the maximum fines for offences.

Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Halton, we are making significant upgrades and improvements in local health care. The new, state-of-the-art Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital opened in December, offering care and services to as many as 180,000 people. Currently, there are large-scale redevelopment projects under way at both the Joseph Brant and Milton District hospitals. Together, these improvements wind up being in the billions of dollars.

I am proud to be part of a government that is making significant investments in health care. But it would give me great pleasure to assure Halton residents that they're not only getting improved care but also improved information security. As the health care sector moves into widespread use of electronic health records—something that we know must happen—people want to know that their personal health history is being properly protected, and Bill 119 does just that.

Mr. Speaker, my 17-year-old daughter just recently, about a week ago, had an emergency appendectomy while I was away. I want to know that her personal information is protected. If Bill 119 moves forward, I will be confident and comfortable knowing that that is the case.

It also strengthens the rights of patients to access their own health information, and allows certain health care practitioners to share data if it means improving patient care. The changes the government is making will go a long way in increasing accountability and transparency. I am pleased that Bill 119 has so far been well received by all parties. I hope that, for the benefit of Ontario residents, this support continues until it is passed.

1700

Mr. Speaker, a person's health history is among the most personal information about them. It is of the utmost importance that we do everything we can to make sure it is protected and that anyone who violates patient privacy

is prosecuted. Bill 119 gives Ontario patients the peace of mind they deserve, which is why I'm pleased to rise today and speak about this bill. I am, of course, in support of it. Thank you so much for giving me the privilege to speak on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Over to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to join this debate. I think it's probably a fair thing to say that the issue of privacy or personal information security is something that's incredibly important to all of us. The deputy House leader and Chair of Cabinet, the MPP for St. Catharines, referenced, without going into details, one example of when personal security was breached and the impact that can have on people's lives. It's very important that we are actually moving forward to put this legislation more firmly in place so that we can indeed protect it. The protection of personal health information is one of those things that I think is something we view perhaps as a given but one that needs to be legislatively enshrined. I am working on the premise of my colleagues that indeed the opposition will be supporting this as well.

Certainly, the aspects that are in the two big pieces—the first section, of course, does introduce amendments to strengthen the Personal Health Information Protection Act as well as introduce rules and governance for shared electronic health records. That's pretty important. The second amendment focuses on proposing amendments to current legislation to clarify the use of the Quality of Care Information Protection Act as well as setting requirements that I think are absolutely vital to improve transparency towards patients when a critical incident occurs. These are all great aspects of this legislation. The amendments ultimately, particularly in terms of the Personal Health Information Protection Act, very much—almost without question—increase accountability and transparency by making it absolutely mandatory to report significant privacy breaches to the Information and Privacy Commissioner and, in certain cases, I guess, to relevant regulatory colleges.

I think it's important that one of the aspects in this as well is strengthening the process to prosecute offences under the Personal Health Information Protection Act by removing the requirement that prosecutions must be commenced within six months of the alleged privacy breach. Again, without me in any way betraying confidentiality, particularly when we're speaking about privacy issues—there have been instances when more than six months have gone by before the issue was raised in terms of the privacy breach. So that's an important part of the legislation, and I'm glad it's in there.

I think it's also important to find a way to more strongly discourage—I guess “snooping” is a term we can use—snooping in patients' records by, under this legislation, doubling the fines for offences under the Personal Health Information Protection Act, from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for individuals and from \$250,000 to \$500,000 for an organization. All the figures I've used

are significant ones. It's something that certainly I support: to make it more punitive to those who might choose to consider trying to do that.

It's also important that the piece is in particularly the first part of the amendments clarifying the actual authority under which health care providers may collect, use and disclose personal health information in electronic health records. We are in a different time—certainly a different time in terms of our society—in terms of the access to records, and that's where privacy, I think, becomes even more important. Again, I think this legislation more strongly reflects that reality.

The other aspect of the legislation—I know that the minister asked his ministry to establish a committee sometime last year to review and provide advice on the implementation of the Quality of Care Information Protection Act and legislation related to that. The information that came forward in terms of the recommendations from the committee was important. They were about strengthening our very important culture of transparency and quality improvement in Ontario's health care system. Certainly us moving forward on those aspects of it is really, really important.

There's no question that, when you look at the summary of the amendments to the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, it does affirm the right of patients to access information about their health care. It makes clear that that particular legislation does not interfere with the health facility's duty to disclose information to patients or interview them as part of a critical incident investigation. It does provide very important regulation-making authority for the minister, if needed, to mandate a uniform approach as to how and when the Quality of Care Information Protection Act can be used.

May I say, I think another piece that's important—we understand, again, how the world has changed from the point of view of technology, let alone social media. The legislation requires that the minister review the act every five years. I think that's pretty important. When one looks at how things have changed in terms of technology, I know that I'm continuing to make my own adjustments to the reality. I've been in the Legislature long enough to well recall the time when I wasn't getting the number of emails I'm getting on a daily basis, let alone the kind of information that comes across from a technological point of view.

The long and the short? This is important legislation. It's important that we are moving it forward. It's important that we are debating it today. Certainly I stand here in strong support of it and trust that our colleagues on all sides of the House will be supporting it as well.

I appreciate having a chance to speak to the legislation. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to offer my remarks on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, in the brief two minutes I have, regarding Bill 119 with respect to medical records and the privacy that patients across this province expect.

Of course, the Progressive Conservative caucus indeed supports this piece of legislation, and it is necessary, but I would be remiss not to point out the fact that this is yet another piece of transparency and accountability legislation in this assembly, after 13 years of this government being in office, that has caused a breach. In fact, we think of privacy laws which are very stringent in this nation. The fact that we're even debating this today says that there are still very valid concerns and the government hasn't been doing its job.

I would also like to point out the fact that the first speaker, the deputy House leader for the government, refused to name the former Toronto mayor whose records were breached through his cancer treatment. I think we, regardless of how one feels about that individual, must point out that it was former Toronto mayor Rob Ford whose cancer treatment and health challenges led to this being exposed. I think that's important.

I would also be remiss not to point out that when the government opposite talks about significant investments in health care, in the past couple of weeks they've gotten it tremendously wrong with teenagers in this province. For example, Lori—I don't have a last name—17 years old, from my constituency in Nepean–Carleton: eight days in a local hospital in Ottawa on suicide watch and she was released, never getting the mental health treatment that she desperately needed. Then we look at Laura Hillier: 18 years old, dying of leukemia, has numbers of donors willing to give her a transplant for bone marrow. But despite that, this government didn't have a bed for her, and she died at 18 years old.

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We have a lot of work to do. So before people start to congratulate themselves on the other side of the aisle for their so-called investments in health care, they may want to start getting that right before they move on to other initiatives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'll use my two minutes to respond to some of the comments.

The bill says that we will review it in five years. Hallelujah. This is perfect. But I can name you a string of bills that say we have to do a review every five years, but yet we don't do it.

Let me start with the bills that created the LHINs, the local health integration networks. They haven't exactly all been stellar in their performance and use of taxpayers' money, according to the Auditor General. But right there in the bill, it says it has to be reviewed every five years. That five years came around in 2012. I wrote and asked, "When are we going to do the review?" I asked again in 2013. I asked again in 2014. While we had a minority government, we started to do a review. Oops—an election; another majority government; no more review. So is it good to review? Absolutely. Do I believe that it's going to be done? Not so much.

Then they talk about how important it is to be able to trust, and I fully agree. Health care is based on trust. You

have to be able to trust the person you talk to, trust the person who is going to provide you the care, and the feeling has to be mutual. But when you keep reading on the first page of the paper of those massive breaches—I mean, we're talking about 12,000 patient records that were gone in 2011; then Montfort, 25,000 patients; then Peel region, 18,000 people; not to mention Mr. Ford, who had his records looked at. Because you know, Speaker, this entire bill rests on technology that would allow your caregiver to have access, but not others. That technology does not exist because eHealth spent a billion dollars for nothing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? I recognize the Minister of Children and Youth Services—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: And?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Women's issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):—and the minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, John. You should be up there.

Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to speak for two minutes to this bill. I think a lot of excellent points have been raised. I think we can all generally agree that the purpose of the legislation and the intent of it is a good one, which is to protect the personal health information of patients and respond to greater transparency and appropriate disclosure of information to patients during critical incident reviews. I think we've talked somewhat at length about the amendments to PHIPA.

I want to talk about the piece that affirms the right of patients to access information about their health care specifically. Sometimes people think that their health care data belongs to an organization or to someone else, like their doctor or a hospital. My view is that health care information belongs to the patient, so I'm very glad to see that this principle is in here.

When I've been through the health care system—and my husband, most recently in January, who had major surgery—we were both provided with an opportunity to access a patient information portal that allowed us immediate access to test results, surgical results, lab results and all those kinds of things, which I think was very empowering and very important, because, first, it enforced the principle that patients own the information about themselves. Secondly, I think it's empowering because it allows people to take charge of their own health care treatment. Of course, they need to discuss the results they get through these kinds of things with their caregiver or doctor. But just being able to see the same information that your doctor gets is an incredible thing. It's incredible progress.

There has been great progress on electronic health, but I'm just highlighting this one example because it's real to me, and I'm very appreciative of that, as is my family.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It is my pleasure as well to join in the debate and add comments to the act that we're

discussing currently right now, the Health Information Protection Act.

I stand up because during my time here at Queen's Park, locally in Huron–Bruce, I have had constituents who have had their health care records looked at and accessed, and the constituents have been absolutely violated in that regard. So this discussion today, and the ultimate passing of the act, are very, very important.

One thing I want to talk about is that, as has been mentioned, the world has changed with the use of technology. Technology is changing very, very rapidly. I would like to offer just one word of caution: When we hear about a review every five years, there's a bit of a flag that comes up for me because, as I said, technology changes very, very quickly. We may need to revisit when that review happens because new tools will become available, new ways of accessing information and records may evolve, and we need to be open to that as well so that we can assess, as new tools are accessed, the risk associated with the new tools.

I would just share with the government opposite that we maybe don't want to tie ourselves too tightly to a five-year circular review. I would suggest that we need to build in flexibility that, as technology evolves, a review of the risks associated with the new technology needs to evolve as well.

As I mentioned, in my riding of Huron–Bruce, we have had constituents who have had their health records accessed, and they did feel totally violated. We need to do what we can to protect those records on their behalf. But in terms of a wholesome approach to quality health care, we need to make sure front-line health care is protected as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I return to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines for final comments.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: This is really an important subject, and that's reflected very much in the comments that have been made by the members. I thank everyone for their comments: the members from Nepean–Carleton, Nickel Belt, Huron–Bruce and my colleague the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

There are a couple of things I'd sure like to go on about. Certainly, in terms of the five-year review, I think it is important. It's an interesting point about technology changing so quickly that we might want to be looking at that time period obviously not necessarily being an end point so much as an early point. It is fascinating how the world is changing.

I guess I am sort of sharing some personal information. Without getting into some detail, I'm about to go through a procedure. It's nothing particularly significant, but I was speaking to the patient navigator myself this morning at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. What was fascinating to me was that I'm going to have the procedure and we got the date picked—which is incredible. We had a long, good conversation. But what she said in passing was that when they had the results of the procedure, I would have access to it. I would be able to access it with—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Yes, it's online.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: That's great. That's patient information. I stand here somewhat startled, because quite frankly, my history, as a guy of a certain age in a certain generation, is: "I'll wait to get the results and my doctor perhaps may contact me if there's something to be worried about."

But this also speaks to the fact that the world is now changing in terms of accessing. We have the right to that information, and it's important, but even I found myself thinking a little bit about, "Wow. What will happen if I read these results of a certain kind?"

The long and the short is that it's an important discussion and very important legislation, making sure we get it right. Fair game, certainly, about the point about the review, and all the more reason why I think it's important that we move forward to get this legislation passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join this debate today. I'm going to take the whole 20 minutes. I'm not going to share the 20 minutes. My colleagues on the other side are in a sharing mood. I know this was—what was this, a kindness day and they're passing out cookies? Apparently, they're sharing their debate time in the Legislature as well, but that's entirely up to them. I, on the other hand, have a responsibility to my party to use up the whole 20 minutes.

1720

Anyway, there have been some interesting points made. I want to say to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines—he spoke about a medical procedure. You put that out on the public record. In fact, in spite of any privacy legislation, when you live in this House, or in another public domain, it's very difficult to keep things private. If there's a procedure of any significance—like what happened with the former mayor of Toronto. The challenge is not only the fact that someone within that institution failed and released that information, which was absolutely wrong—it should be the privilege of the person themselves to decide whether that becomes public. But when you live a public life—if I wasn't here for several weeks, people would ask questions. Hell, if I'm not here for a day, people ask questions. So even though we're coming out with new legislation, when you live the life of a public figure, and even more so—I say it with respect to members of the cabinet, because when they're not around, people are wondering, "What's going on?" We all have the right to privacy, but I think it all depends on what you do in your life as well. When you live in a fishbowl, people are always staring through the glass. They want to know what's going on. Even if you're not interested in revealing that information, in some ways you'll almost be forced to because the question will remain: "Why are you not here in the House debating this legislation?"—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Guys, why don't you take this over somewhere else?

"Why are you not in the House debating this legislation and being part of what takes place in this House?"

Having said that, there are changes here that are positive, and I think it's important that we acknowledge that, on the part of the government, they are making changes, but it also speaks to what my colleagues have said about reviewing this in a more timely fashion.

Every one of us today has BlackBerrys, and there are people here are with iPads. I'd better not put this one on the desk because if it goes off, it's going to bother those folks up in the broadcast booth; it rings in their ears. We don't want that to happen. But some people have iPads in here. They've got different technologies. Think of the technology in your offices and in your homes and how fast it becomes obsolete. There are still some members of this House who have flip phones. No matter where you go, there are some people that will buck a trend no matter what that trend may be.

Technology has a very short shelf life today. It's about the shelf life of a quart of milk. I'm not even talking about Lactantia fine-filtered milk—just regular milk. Technology changes so rapidly. So why are we looking at something that reviews something that is so technologically connected on a five-year basis? We need to be looking at this, quite frankly, even more frequently to ensure that we're keeping up with the Joneses.

If you go into a hospital and you're talking about a patient and you're asking, "Is John Yakabuski in here? I'm just wondering. I wanted to go visit him," they'll type him up on the screen. You may even be able to see that screen. You may see stuff on there that perhaps you shouldn't see.

Mr. Arthur Potts: He's in the psych ward.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's not very nice, quite frankly. In fairness to the people who are dealing with mental health issues in this province and in this world, that comment should be withdrawn, to be fair. We have so many people who are fighting mental health issues in this world today, and to make a joke about it in this chamber—quite frankly, Mr. Potts, I think you should apologize to everyone.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the member appropriately to withdraw.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I withdraw, with my apologies.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I lost my train of thought for a moment.

Let's talk about mental health issues for a minute. Let's talk about the fact that we're here talking about privacy legislation. I think that's important. There is no question about it. Legislation protecting the privacy of patients is hugely important. But what good is protecting the privacy of treatment that you're getting at a hospital or an institution if you can't get it because the government has cut back the funding for that particular program?

It's all wonderful for someone to be able to protect their medical records, but if their medical records are "postponed, delayed, postponed, delayed, cancelled,"

that's not much to protect. So with respect to protecting the privacy of individuals and the medical records of people, we also have to make sure that the funding is there to provide that medical care that is so desperately needed for so many people in this province here today.

The one thing I did want to also speak about today was the access to information for the patients themselves. I think it's hugely important. Years ago, you couldn't get squat out of a doctor. Basically, you got your visit. Hopefully, things were dealt with. But if you ever went to a doctor's office and said, "I'd like to have—" the response of the medical profession would be "Are you kidding me? I own those records," and it was accepted basically that, okay, that was the way it was.

Thankfully, that has changed. I know that the minister talked about having instant access to the results of any and all procedures that may or may not take place. That's a positive move. I know that my own physician, Dr. Cybulski, in Barry's Bay, gives me a full report if I have a physical or an examination or something like that—a full report on all of my levels of cholesterol and sugar and all of that kind of stuff. At one time, if you went to the doctor, he might tell you your sugar is high or he might tell you that your cholesterol is low or your cholesterol is high, but you'd never ever get the numbers because, quite frankly, you weren't smart enough to know what they meant anyway, or that would have been basically the assumption: that you're not smart enough to know what they mean anyway.

But today, people do take ownership of their health in a way that they never did before, and technology has helped with that. Technology has allowed us to understand what a healthy cholesterol number is, what an unhealthy cholesterol number is, what a healthy sugar level is, what an unhealthy sugar level is, and all kinds of other numbers that are pertinent and determinant of your general health.

So we're far more involved in our health today than we were at any time in the past. We used to go to the doctor maybe if we felt sick. Now we keep track of our health in a way that we've never done before. People walk around with fitness bracelets on their wrist, making sure they monitor how many steps they have taken. If you do, you're able to monitor how many steps you've taken that day, how many stairs you've climbed and how many calories you have burnt. They can also set them so that they have fitness goals, so that as they progress, the goals change. Let's say your goal was you had to do 8,000 steps—

Mr. John Fraser: I'm already there.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You're already there. Then that little fitness bracelet that my colleague there is pointing out—I can't say who it is just yet because he hasn't revealed that. I'm protecting his privacy. But a colleague from across the way is displaying one of those fitness bracelets and he's already saying that he has met his step goal for today. Well, that bracelet will set you a new goal now, correct? There should be a new goal set automatically by that bracelet because you were just too

good. We're going to give you a new goal to see how you measure up tomorrow.

That's the kind of a thing I'm getting at, Speaker, where people are taking more and more ownership of their own health. In order to be able to do that in a comprehensive way, they have to have access to all of those records from the health professions out there. That's a positive change on the part of the government with this bill.

1730

I have to put my glasses on to see a couple of things here. I'm disclosing that I need reading glasses; I'm not worried about protecting that privacy.

I know that the deputy House leader, the member from St. Catharines, talked about how this will make it mandatory to report privacy breaches, as defined in regulation, to the Information and Privacy Commissioner and relevant regulatory colleges. That's an important aspect of this bill or any other piece of legislation. Anyone who is considering doing something that would be contrary to the legislation knows that the bill makes it mandatory, if someone is aware that a breach has taken place, that it must be reported.

Somebody is not going to commit a breach and it's going to be, "Listen, bud, you were wrong. You breached the act, and you shouldn't have done that." No, it goes much further now. It's going to ensure that there is a mandatory reporting provision in the bill, so it can't just end in a conversation over the water cooler, "Don't let that happen again." No, it moves up a level to the privacy commissioner and to any relevant regulatory college. If that person is a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, it would be elevated to that college.

What it does is create another roadblock or impediment to someone. It discourages someone from breaching the act. That's strengthening the legislation, from that perspective, and that is something that I know all of us here in the House would quite eagerly support.

The act was reviewed, I remember, back in 2004. I think it was Bill 8 then. We had extensive hearings throughout the province on that act. I know that my colleague from Simcoe-Grey, who was here at that time, would recall that when Bill 8, I think it was, went through the Legislature, we travelled across the province. There were multiple days of hearings here in Toronto. It was big—the changes at that time.

This bill doesn't seem to be getting quite that kind of attention. I'm always disappointed when the government doesn't take a bill out to get full input from the people who are most broadly affected by it. But we live in majority times, and from time to time the government decides that it's not necessary. In fact, most times they decide it's not necessary.

I don't want to be too hard on them today. It's the first day back, and they're just getting over things, you know. But I'll warm up over the next couple of weeks, I'm sure, and probably will be able to be a little more harsh from time to time.

Ms. Soo Wong: Kindness.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is kindness day—I think I heard the member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, it is kindness day. Some people bring in cookies; maybe she could have brought in some rum cake and been really kind to everybody, and we'd be kind in return.

Let's not forget about the challenges that are facing us in health care here in Ontario today. I'm not saying it's always easy, but you must be concerned over there, on that side of the House, on the government side, about all the hospitals that are facing severe budget problems as a result of a failure by your government to meet their fiscal needs. All across the province, we're finding cutbacks being forced upon hospitals.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Remember the 100,000 cuts you guys wanted to do?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to the Associate Minister of Health responsible for long-term care, this is not about any previous government. This is your watch. You are in charge. You've been in charge for nigh on 13 years. Don't try to lay this on any other government at this point. This is very important, and you need to consider the effects that your health cuts are having here throughout the province of Ontario. And I say to you, Speaker—yes, through you—that they should be very concerned about the effects of health care cuts in the province of Ontario.

We recently went through a by-election in Whitby–Oshawa. I'm sure that many of the people on the other side of the House were campaigning in that by-election, as were many of my colleagues; I was there myself at least five times. And one of the biggest things that kept coming back from people—two big issues: your abject failure on the energy file, and the cutbacks in health care and how they are hurting people.

Ms. Soo Wong: What's it got to do with the bill?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, here is the issue, I say to my friend from Scarborough–Agincourt. Keep smiling. Here's the issue: This bill is important. And she's saying, what do the health care cutbacks have to do with the bill? Health care cutbacks were a huge issue in that election. Maybe you should review the numbers. I say to the member for Scarborough–Agincourt—and I say it through you, Mr. Speaker, because all debate goes through you, as you are well aware. I say to the member, through you, Speaker, that this bill, while important, does absolutely nothing to salve the fears and concerns of all of those people who are wondering, "Is the health care I need going to be there in Kathleen Wynne's Ontario? Is it going to be there when every time I turn around, I go to the hospital and they tell me there's going to be some cutbacks on these procedures?" We're going to be losing, as we heard, a whole obstetrics ward in a hospital; it's disappearing. I mean, you have to ask yourself, where does this lead us down the road, not this year, next year—and then the finance minister is out there today telling the world that next year we're going to balance the budget. And by the way, we're going to have a

budget on February 25. What is going to be in it for health care on February 25?

Mr. John Fraser: You'll have to wait and see.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I guess we'll have to wait. But the reports from the committee that travelled—the finance committee hasn't even tabled its reports. On the one hand, the finance minister is saying he's waiting for the input from the committee, waiting for the input from the hearings, but now he's going to have a budget on February 25? That's next week. I think something is fishy in Denmark, as they say. I think that budget is written and we're going to find out next Thursday just how hard it's going to be on the people of Ontario, not only in health care, not only in transportation, not only in natural resources, but in every ministry that you people are responsible for. We're going to find out next Thursday just how much harder it is to get around and to live in Kathleen Wynne's Ontario in 2016.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I would ask that those being attentive to the debate would show some self-control and not be as loud or as vocal as one has demonstrated at this point in time. We're doing really well so far.

Now I'm going to move to questions and comments. I recognize the member from Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Our colleague has a knack for being able to end on a crescendo, but he puts a lot of emphasis on his points by doing so. I won't take that approach. I'll simply stick to some of the points that I think I heard him make.

1740

We are in an innovative era that is ever-changing on this planet, minute to minute. Technologies are around us; data is floating around us. What is interesting, Speaker, is that it presents an opportunity for commerce, of course, but it presents an opportunity to be used potentially in nefarious ways. Ultimately, that's what this bill is looking to prevent and to protect patients from.

If anyone has ever googled anything on the Internet medical-wise—how to get rid of a toothache, let's say—you'll find a whole host of remedies, some scientifically backed; some potentially not. But what you will find for certain is that for the following week or month, you'll be followed by ads trying to sell you remedies for toothaches. It's opportunistic. It preys on people. That's what this data—that's the value that it has, and people are looking for it. Unfortunately, people are willing to sell it and to offload that data in massive blocks, as we've seen before. That's what we have to acknowledge; that's what we have to ensure that we protect and look into the future to understand what systems are out there, what systems are in place, and make sure that we're doing it with good value. Let's not blow the kitty on something that may not potentially protect us in the future, especially given the status of our primary health care system as it is. We need to get the fundamentals right. Nurses, doctors, health care practitioners that are being laid off—let's ensure that the system works as a whole first before we go blowing a whole bunch of money on unproven systems.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I do want to say one thing about health information: It is our personal information. I'm glad that the member across agrees that this piece of legislation is very important to protect very personal information, the misuse of which can have a very profound impact on people's lives: their ability to work, their ability to obtain insurance—a wide variety of things.

We did mention these little Fitbits here. I have surpassed my goal for the day, and I'm glad the member across is going to set me another one. But the interesting thing about these Fitbits—and the member from Essex alluded to this—is that this sends a message back to a server that says what my heart rate is every day; it sends back a message that says how I slept. So it is personal information—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, how well I slept. I slept very well last night. It was about eight hours. It doesn't measure while I'm in here. It doesn't work for that effect.

We don't realize that when we google, people can follow our searches. So if we're googling a certain condition, that could be something that at some point people could use against us—an insurer, for instance. So the protection of personal information, and also realizing how we protect our own personal information, is really a very important thing.

I'm supportive of this legislation, and I'm glad to hear of the member's support. I totally disagree with his assessment of what we're doing in health care and hospitals. Every year we've provided more funds. We've had to flat-line because of our economic circumstances, but I know that we're investing more money in primary care, and that acute care—we have to balance out need for primary care and acute care so that we get it right, so that we keep people healthy as opposed to having to intervene in their lives because we haven't been able to keep them healthy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to rise and join this debate and offer my congratulations to my friend and colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. As you all know, and as I could tell by the reaction to his passionate and eloquent messages around this particular bill—Bill 119—this member has really hit a nerve when it comes to how we can do better. Of course, we all need to be mindful of protecting our electronic health records, but it can't stop there. When we talk about proper health care, it just can't stop at protecting electronic records. We do need to take a full assessment of health care and how it's being delivered on our front lines.

We heard earlier in this debate that, unfortunately, some of the lack of oversight and some of the lack of transparency that lead to actual funds quickly getting to

the front line are impeding the hopes and dreams of young people.

As much time and as much effort as is being spent on electronic records, to fix that mess that has happened in the first place, we need to be addressing and applying that same time and that same effort to fixing what's wrong in our front-line health care system as well.

We all know of and are saddened by the passing of Ms. Hillier, who was on a wait-list, waiting for and hoping for her future to be valued and worked upon and addressed by having a needed operation. But unfortunately, that did not happen.

We have to live and respect her legacy and hope that all front-line health care can be addressed and fixed, just like the eHealth issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's always a pleasure to get up and represent my constituents of Windsor West and add their voice to the debate.

I find it interesting that the member from Essex brought up toothaches, because I was a dental assistant before I came here. I can tell you that even in a dental office, the protection of a patient's information was of the utmost importance, to the point where if we had spouses in for an appointment at the same time, we weren't even allowed to say we had done an extraction on one of the spouses. We weren't allowed to then give care instructions for home in front of the other spouse, unless the spouse we had treated had signed a release form and we knew it was okay to discuss that in front of their spouse. So I certainly understand the importance of protecting a patient's private information.

We know, in this age of technology, how difficult it is becoming to take care of people's private information and make sure that it's not getting out there in cyberspace and shared with others.

I wanted to touch on something the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke brought up. Members from the other side were yelling at him to get his facts straight when he was talking about health care cuts, because apparently they believe these aren't happening. I'd just like to point out a fact, because you were asking for facts. You can call back to Windsor, or you can drive to Windsor, and you can talk to the nurses in Windsor: 169 RNs were given pink slips yesterday.

Interjection: On Valentine's Day; on Family Day.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: On Family Day and Valentine's Day weekend, 169 RNs were handed their pink slips. There's a health-care-cut fact for you, so you can't dispute what the member from Renfrew–Nipissing was saying. We are seeing cuts across the province.

In order to have this personal information to protect, we need front-line workers in these hospitals and health care facilities to take care of the patients coming in. Otherwise, they're going to die waiting for care, or they're going to leave a hospital without getting care.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his final comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the members from Essex, Ottawa South and Windsor West, and my colleague from Huron–Bruce, for their comments.

It was certainly never my intention, but apparently I must have hit a nerve over there. I was just trying to point out some facts, and I've been met with significant resistance from the government side. But the member from Windsor West points out that in her community, 169 nurses received their pink slips—

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Yesterday.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —yesterday, on Family Day. This is what the crux of the problem is: How are we supposed to deliver the health care that people's privacy is supposed to be protected in if we're making cutbacks in all our hospitals and all our institutions because of the budgetary mess that this province is in under this government?

Speaker, if they hadn't blown \$1.1 billion on gas plant cancellations and if they hadn't blown over \$1 billion extra on smart meters, do you think maybe those 169 nurses might not have gotten their pink slips?

This is what has come back to roost for the government. The chickens have come home to roost, because of all of the scandals and all of the mismanagement.

There is only so much money. When you spend it on relocating gas plants, you can't spend it on nurses. When you spend it on a smart-meter fiasco, you can't spend it on front-line health care, mental health initiatives or for the operation for that young lady who passed away on a wait-list. When you spend it on scandals and wasteful plans, you don't have it for the vital services that Ontarians want, need and deserve. What they don't need is more of this government.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's always a pleasure to rise in this House, particularly to talk about issues that I might know something about, like Bill 119, the Health Information Protection Act.

I only have a very few minutes here, so I want to zoom in on what people actually had to say here today. To start off, we had the member from Halton, who had a few minutes and spoke about her daughter's health care issues. That's actually how breaches happen. The first question that came to my mind when I heard her talking about her daughter—this isn't to criticize her, but the first thing I thought was, "Your daughter is 17. Has your daughter given you permission to talk about her health care issues here in the Legislature?" Because the legal age is 16 or, in some cases, only 14 years old.

Those of us who have worked in the health care field see breaches happen. Some of them happen purposefully, and some of them happen inadvertently. We had the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke talking about the importance of protecting medical records, and absolutely, that is important. Trust is paramount in health care between patients and health care providers.

At the end of the day, as this government continues to cut the bucks—although they say they have flatlined, the end result of that is that, over the last four years, that has amounted to a 7% or greater cut to the hospitals in the province, which is why we're seeing 169 jobs cut in Windsor. Twelve hundred registered nurses and registered practical nurses lost their jobs in the last year in the province of Ontario.

M^{me} France Gélinas: And 400 last month.

Ms. Cindy Forster: And 400 just last month.

At the end of the day, we're talking about improving health care's protection of medical records, but where is that funding going to come from to actually improve the software that may have to have different layers of access for different people? I say that the Liberal government is actually going to put that, once again, on the backs of the hospitals and any agencies that will be required to improve this protection. At the end of the day, there will be even less front-line care because hospitals will be required to pay for that, and more nurses will be laid off in the system.

Then there's the issue of paper, phone and electronic health records. We had an example from the member from Windsor when she was a dental assistant, and how she couldn't verbally tell a husband that their spouse had an extraction that day. We have reports of people receiving information where somebody calls and says, "I want you to come back for a second mammogram," when your family didn't even know that you'd gone for a mammogram. Those things will not be captured by this legislation. This legislation is actually a half-measure at best.

We had a minister without portfolio talk about how everyone who was consulted is in favour and that all of their recommendations were actually put in the bill. But in fact, we've talked to the OMA, the Ontario Nurses' Association and other agencies who have said that they weren't consulted. There was no fulsome consultation. They were probably at a round table where they had five minutes to make a case, but they wanted to have a fulsome discussion about how this is going to not only impact patients' privacy but their practices, whether or not it be in the hospital.

I remember when Deb Matthews was the Minister of Health and talked about the Liberal government not wanting to privatize any more health care, but in fact they continue to privatize clinics for colonoscopies, for eye surgery, for pain management, that actually used to be in the hospital. We continue to see dialysis patients going out into the community. They're no longer in the hospital sector. None of these are covered by this legislation. As we continue to privatize—when we said we weren't going to—more of the health care in the private sector, we're not ensuring that this legislation is actually going to protect those patients who are not in the hospital.

I can tell you, from my experience representing nurses across the province when the PHIPA legislation was first brought in, that there are some grey areas. If somebody is on purpose being nosey and looking at people's medical

records, that should absolutely not be tolerated. But, in fact, the legislation now is going to make it more rigorous in a caring profession, where nurses and doctors care about their patients and, sometimes, want to or need to follow those patients. In fact, we've had nurses suspended and fired because the legislation that was in place, which was less rigorous, put them in a position where the legislation said that they had breached and they hadn't.

I had one situation where a mother who was a nurse was looking at her child's records online because her child was at a hospital in Hamilton while she was in Niagara. She was terminated from her job. At the end of the day, we were able to get her job back, but the legislation was such that her child wasn't in her circle of care, so she didn't have any entitlement to be looking at the records.

So I was actually happy when the Minister of Children and Youth Services said that she, at least, now could look at her own record on file, but that wouldn't help a nurse who was terminated in the system. If I go back to the member from Oakville, had she been a nurse in the hospital who had shared the information of her 17-year-old daughter with someone else without her consent, she would have breached the current legislation and the new legislation and she actually could have lost her job in a hospital setting or in some agency where this legislation, in fact, may apply.

So there are lots of reasons to have some more consultation on this bill. Certainly we support patients' privacy with respect to their health records, but I think that it's important that we make sure that we do it right. We haven't reviewed the legislation in 10 years. It was supposed to be reviewed five years ago. But let's not be hurrying to fix something until we're sure that every piece of it that needs to be addressed is. Let's make sure that we're not firing health care workers unjustly because the legislation is so rigorous that it doesn't even allow them to do their job.

I'll just use my last minute to give you an example of that. A patient is in the emergency department. A nurse works in the emergency on Sunday but also works in the intensive care unit on Monday. That patient he looked after doesn't show up in his intensive care unit on Monday. He wonders why. He came in with chest pain. He wonders, "What happened to that patient? Did that patient pass away? Did that patient get transferred to another facility? I really wonder." He has a look—or she has a look, whatever the case is—at that patient's record and he loses his job because that patient was no longer in his circle of care the next day. And there wasn't anything we could do to give that person their job back.

Think about physicians who work in the emergency but tomorrow they want to follow up on that patient who isn't their patient any longer. As this legislation starts to grow and make sure that physicians are also following the legislation, physicians could be disciplined for looking at a patient's file because that patient is no longer in their circle of care the next day or two days, after they were in some other department.

1800

I wish I had more time to actually give you some concrete examples, but there is certainly more work to be done on this piece of legislation.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. You will have more time when this bill is debated again in this House.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to proclaim the month of February as Black History Month / Loi proclamant le mois de février Mois de l'histoire des Noirs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

TAXATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Leeds–Grenville has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes. To the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Here is what I hope happens this afternoon. I know both the minister and the parliamentary assistant are here. I hope one of them is going to stand up and tell me that they're not going to proceed with implementing a municipal car tax. I didn't hear that when I asked the minister a question on December 10, which is really why I'm back here this evening.

What I heard from the minister that day sounded a lot like what he told me when I first asked him about a municipal land transfer tax, or MLTT. You will recall that there was a lot of bluster and denial by the minister back in October and November, and it wasn't until thousands of Ontarians bombarded government MPPs with emails demanding they support my motion opposing the MLTT that he then came clean.

Just days before we were set to debate my motion, the minister was being forced to get on his feet and declare the MLTT was dead. It was quite a revelation, Speaker. For six weeks, he claimed I was making it up, but there he was suddenly fessing up. This regressive land tax, one they insisted never existed, was being taken off the table.

I have to say, it was a great victory for the Ontario PC caucus. I want to thank all of our members and all members across the way for all their initiative on this issue.

But if you know this government, Speaker—and I do, I think, after six years of watching them up close—you know that raising taxes is in their DNA. It's who they are. So while we got them to scrap the MLTT, I had a feeling that there might be something else up their sleeve, and that was using the ongoing Municipal Act review to slip in a new tax on car owners by authorizing municipalities to collect a vehicle registration tax.

Currently, only the city of Toronto has the power to levy a tax on vehicle owners. You'll recall that it was the opposition to that hated car tax brought in by Mayor Miller that helped drive Rob Ford into the mayor's office in 2010. He followed through on a campaign promise to scrap the car tax, and ever since any attempts to rev it back up have stalled.

Let's be clear about the cost implications for the owners of Ontario's 11 million registered vehicles if the minister puts a municipal car tax in gear. Toronto's car tax dinged vehicle owners to the tune of \$60 annually. If a similar tax was implemented across Ontario's 444 municipalities, the cost to drivers would be a jaw-dropping \$660 million.

Remember, Speaker, these motorists already send in about \$10 billion every year to the provincial treasury in various licensing fees and taxes. I think they pay enough and that a municipal car tax would be yet another burden on families whose budgets are already stretched to the breaking point.

I know that the minister or the parliamentary assistant—I'm not sure which is going to respond—is probably going to stand up and tell you that I don't trust municipalities because I'm against giving them these new taxing powers. That is not true, Speaker—not true.

Look, I'm a former mayor. I'm a former CAO. I'm actually a former president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. So I know a thing or two about municipalities and their concerns with sustainable funding. I also know that it isn't about trust; it's about whether you believe this problem only gets solved through new taxes. The Wynne government would love nothing more than to hand new taxing powers to municipalities and force them to put them into place. After all, it saves them from doing the hard work of curbing their own wasteful spending, so that interest on our debt isn't the third-largest expenditure in the budget. Doing that hard work would allow us to adequately support municipalities. Instead, the government wants to do what it always does: just create a new tax. And it's the perfect tax, because they don't have to be the bad guy in collecting it. They'll let municipalities do the dirty work, and if they don't, well, they can kiss provincial funding goodbye.

Speaker, none of the mayors I've talked to in the past couple of months—none of them—are eager to start charging a car tax. That's because they know that they

will be wearing a bull's eye when it comes to the next municipal election in the province of Ontario. We all know vehicle owners don't want a new car tax.

So to my friends across the aisle, I say that you can avoid a repeat of the municipal land transfer tax debacle and save the embarrassment of having to back down after several weeks of denial. Do what the Trillium Automobile Dealers Association, which represents more than 1,000 new car dealers, said to the minister in a February 2 letter: Tell us clearly you're not going to expand a municipal vehicle registration tax.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Over to the minister. You have up to five minutes to respond.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm truly disappointed in the party opposite, and in particular the member for Leeds–Grenville—disappointed, but not at all surprised, because the PCs, if nothing else, are at least consistent in their lack of respect for Ontario's municipal governments.

It's one of the reasons I stand here today. I was mayor of a small rural town when the previous PC government turned their backs on local communities. Instead of having a Minister of Municipal Affairs, they had a minister of municipal downloading. They dumped more than \$3 billion in costs on local governments which were not equipped to absorb them. And when municipalities complained, they said, "Well, just raise your property taxes."

The member for Leeds–Grenville is now proudly carrying on the tradition of his party's contempt for municipal governments. Mr. Speaker, I believe in partnerships. Unfortunately, after their party was in power, we had to walk through the rubble to pick up the pieces, and it's clear that the member opposite doesn't want to help out here. I consider our municipal partners as a mature, responsible level of government; he obviously doesn't.

As minister, I'm committed to listening to and seeking the advice of our municipal partners, to help them grow strong and vibrant communities.

Mr. Steve Clark: They don't want new revenue tools.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: So if AMO asked for new revenue tools, you'd respect that? Would you respect that? You don't care what they ask for. There: You've got it all in a nutshell. You respect them, but you don't care what they say.

Mr. Speaker, since I became minister—

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, I did not say that. He put words in my mouth that are untrue. I respect municipalities. He knows that. He knows.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. That's not a point of order.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: He had his shot.

Mr. Speaker, since I became minister, I've met with more than 200 mayors and councils. Local governments want to remain financially sustainable and accountable, and they want the flexibility to respond to the very people they serve. They are asking themselves: Is the property tax base sufficient to meet the long-term needs

of our residents? Is it the best tool? Should it be the only tool?

During the municipal legislative review, we received many requests from the municipal sector, business interests, advocacy groups and the public regarding access to new revenue tools. We received submissions on revenue tools from almost every municipal organization across Ontario: AMO, MARCO, LUMCO and OGRA/ROMA.

It's important to point out that most of the municipal requests for new revenue tools referenced the taxation authority available to the city of Toronto. And I don't hear the members opposite talk about taking that authority away from the city of Toronto.

For months now, MPP Clark has been making unfounded comments regarding the government's work on this. In fact, he should write a book. He could call it *A Farewell to Arms*, because he has broken both of his arms patting himself on the back.

Here's the truth of the matter: The member for Leeds-Grenville wants municipalities to be hog-tied. He doesn't think they need any new tools, and he wants to systematically close the door, to shut down any conversation that might lead to greater flexibility and more sustainability for municipal finance.

Speaker, I trust our municipal leaders to make decisions that are in the best interests of the people they serve, and to be accountable to those citizens. Perhaps the member opposite will come to the OGRA/ROMA meeting next week, tell the city of Toronto that he wants to take their taxing powers away, and explain why his party is so opposed to any reform of municipal finance. I think they'd appreciate hearing from you and hearing your rationale for that.

Mr. Steve Clark: I never said anything about the city of Toronto.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Okay. Why don't you just come and tell them generically, then, without referencing Toronto, that you don't favour any new revenue tools, that they can do quite well with what they've got, notwithstanding the fact that you dissed them in terms of the downloading and the dumping of costs—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Minister, I would ask that—

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —social housing and all those other costs—

Mr. Steve Clark: I trust them. I don't trust you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please.

Minister, I would ask that comments made—which I appreciate—are directed through the Speaker. Okay?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: You're welcome.

I just want to say that the history is very telling. They tell municipalities something. I invite the member opposite to come out to OGRA/ROMA, either he or his leader, and tell them exactly where they stand. Tell them they've got all the revenue tools they need—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —and they don't need any more help from the provincial government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. The time allotted for the late show has expired. This House is adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1812.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
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Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
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Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
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Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

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French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 17 February 2016

Mercredi 17 février 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 17 February 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 17 février 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order: Minister.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to all the good folks in Peterborough riding this morning. I know they're digging out from a little bit of snow yesterday.

I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice for the arrangement of proceedings for debate on concurrence in supply.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Minister.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I move that, notwithstanding any standing order, the order for concurrence in supply for the various ministries and offices, as represented by government orders 34 through 40, inclusive, shall be called concurrently; and that when such orders are called they shall be considered concurrently in a single debate; and two hours shall be allotted to the debate, divided equally among the recognized parties, at the end of which time the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of the order for concurrence in supply for each of the ministries and offices referred to above; and that any required divisions in the orders for concurrence in supply shall be deferred to deferred votes, such votes to be taken in succession, with one five-minute bell.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Leal moves that, notwithstanding any standing order, the order of concurrence in supply for the various ministries and offices, as represented by government orders 34 through 40, inclusive, shall be called concurrently; and that when such orders are called they shall be considered concurrently in a single debate; and two hours shall be allotted to the debate, divided equally among the recognized parties, at the end of which time the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispensed.

Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

Hon. Jeff Leal: I move concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy, including supplementaries; the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure; Ministry of Research and Innovation; the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs; the Ministry of Finance, including supplementaries; the Ministry of Education; and the Office of Francophone Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Leal has moved concurrence in government orders 34 through 40. Mr. Leal.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank all sides of the House this morning for being in a very co-operative mood and for allowing us to move forward with concurrence.

We do know that concurrence represents the Legislature's approval of estimates for the fiscal year. Concurrence is required for all ministries and offices that have been selected for review; the Standing Committee on Estimates is very important. Estimates of ministries and offices not selected by the committee were deemed passed by the estimates committee and reported to the House last fall, concurred on September 24, 2015, and November 4, 2015.

We're moving forward with estimates to co-operate, of course, with the committee. It's a very important part of our parliamentary democracy established years ago by Westminster, when various government departments would come forward to be reviewed by a standing committee on estimates to peruse the money that's being spent—of course, by the government of Ontario and various ministries that will impact north, south, east and west.

We'll have the opportunity to look at a number of things through estimates, a very important committee. At that time, suffice to say, with those introductory remarks it will allow us to move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's a pleasure to speak to this important issue today, to talk about the concurrence in the estimates. When I think about why we're here, I think we're all here to make a difference for our communities and improve the quality of life of the people that we represent. Fundamental to doing that is making sure that we're allocating funding to those priorities. That's really what this is all about.

What I'd like to do today are a few things: I want to go over a few points just for the sake of the viewers at home and to refresh our own memory about what concurrence in the estimates actually is, to revisit that estimates process and recap what has happened so far this fiscal year. I will also discuss the Supply Act and how it relates to concurrence in the estimates and why it is important. Also, I will take a bit of time to outline some of the achievements of the past year, time permitting, to help provide some context for the discussion, and ultimately to refer back to what I said at the beginning, which is how the estimates help us achieve our goals of making a difference in the lives of the people that we represent.

Let me just give some background again on what concurrence in the estimates is, for the folks at home. Concurrence basically represents the Legislature's approval of the estimates for a fiscal year. In this case, we are discussing concurrence for the 2015-16 fiscal year, so the fiscal year that ends March 31, 2016—in a month and a half or so.

Concurrence is required for all ministries and offices that have been selected for review by the Standing Committee on Estimates. Estimates of ministries and offices not selected by the committee were deemed passed by the estimates committee, reported to the House, and received and concurred in, in this case, on September 24, 2015, and November 4, 2015, respectively.

For the 2015-16 fiscal, the committee selected seven ministries and offices for review. On November 26, the committee on estimates filed its report with the Legislative Assembly on its review of the estimates of the following ministries: the Ministry of Energy; the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure; and the Ministry of Research and Innovation. On November 30, the committee selected for consideration the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education and the Office of Francophone Affairs. The assembly's concurrence in the estimates, which we are speaking about today, represents the approval of these selected ministries' and offices' estimates.

The Supply Act would be introduced following orders in concurrence in estimates and, if passed, would represent the final statutory authority for spending by the government in this assembly. So today's discussion and vote are important steps in approving government spending for this past fiscal year, which will end on March 31, 2016.

I also just want to take a moment to remind members where we are in the fiscal cycle. The estimates for government ministries and offices, volume 1, was tabled in the Legislature on May 14, 2015; volume 2, for legislative offices, was tabled November 3, 2015, and supplementary estimates were also tabled in the fall. The estimates set out a comprehensive account of the government's intended expenditures for the fiscal year and include details of the spending plans that were presented in our 2015 budget.

0910

As we near the end of fiscal year 2015-16, we will soon be introducing the Supply Act, should concurrence

in the estimates be reached here. So today's concurrence in the estimates discussion is really important because it allows us to move forward with finalizing the review of the estimates that has taken place.

The Supply Act is required every fiscal year to provide the final approval and legal authority for all spending for the year. Let me be clear for those of us here who need a reminder—I'm sure most of you don't, but certainly for those folks back home who are watching: This does not seek any new spending; it authorizes expenditures as reflected in the estimates for the fiscal year that ends this March 31. Today's concurrence in the estimates must be obtained before the Supply Act can be introduced. The Supply Act would constitute the final authorization by the Legislature of the government's program spending for the fiscal year. It would give the government the authority to finance its programs and honour its commitments, and enhance the quality of life for the people we represent.

Let me recall just briefly what some of the estimates we're talking about today have delivered. When you think about where we were in 2009, in the global economic downturn, Ontario has taken great strides since the fallout from the downturn, which had a devastating impact, of course, on the people of Ontario and many parts of the world. Mr. Speaker, we're committed to balancing the budget in a fair and responsible way by 2017-18. Achieving a balanced budget is important because it allows us to support the programs, make the investments and deliver the estimates that allow us to deliver those services that the people of Ontario rely on. Balancing the budget will require a relentless focus on finding smarter and better ways to deliver the best possible value for every dollar we spend as we review and transform government programs and manage public sector compensation.

The 2014-15 deficit was \$10.3 billion, down about \$2.2 billion from the 2014 projection of \$12.5 billion. This marked the sixth year in a row that Ontario beat its deficit target. In the 2015 Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review, the government projected deficits of \$7.5 billion in 2015-16 and \$4.5 billion in 2016-17, and a return to balance in 2017-18. This reflected an improvement of \$1 billion in 2015-16 and \$300 million in 2016-17, compared with deficit targets laid out in the 2015 budget.

The way we're going about this, through PRRT, is a process that involves going through every program in government and finding the best bang for the taxpayer dollar to basically ensure that we're spending money as wisely as possible and getting the best results and outcomes for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, what I want to say in summary is that this debate today is really important. The importance of concurrence in the estimates today cannot be understated. Receiving concurrence in the estimates would allow the Supply Act to be introduced, providing final spending authority for the fiscal year that is coming to a close. Again, this is not about approving new spending; it's

about providing authority for the government to finance its programs and honour its commitments. This is about approving spending on important priorities, the things that people care about: health care, education, transportation, infrastructure—the things we debate in this Legislature every single day.

I urge all members to support concurrence in the estimates so that the important work on the public services that the people of Ontario care about can be delivered and can be approved.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you on another snowy morning in the greater Toronto area, and likely across most of Ontario as well. I will be speaking a little bit about my occasions in the chair during estimates committee, but I would like to just back up and talk about what has occurred over the last couple of months or so in Prince Edward–Hastings, and more specifically in Whitby–Oshawa.

I spent a lot of the break, when we were back in our constituencies, meeting with my constituents. I can tell you that a lot of the people I met with were doctors—a lot of doctors. Family physicians, emergency room doctors, obstetricians—you name it—I met with all kinds of doctors. And the doctors are furious with this government right now because of unilateral cuts that have been made. So when the member opposite stands up and says, “We’re worried about our health care and making sure that we have proper health care going forward,” they’re not doing what needs to be done to ensure that we have proper health care going forward.

The doctors I spoke with, family physicians who had just left university, have all kinds of student debt, and now they’ve been hit with a unilateral cut by this government that’s making it more and more difficult for them to stay in Ontario. There are a lot of young doctors who want to stay and work in Ontario, but because of the cuts that have been forced upon them by this government, by Kathleen Wynne and the Liberal government, they are now second-guessing whether Ontario is the right place for them to be. These doctors are telling me they would be far better off working in Saskatchewan, in British Columbia, in Alberta. The compensation is better for them there.

They’re fed up with the fact that the Minister of Health here in Ontario goes out to the stand and says that the average doctor in Ontario is making \$368,000. I can tell you that the family physicians in the Quinte region aren’t making \$360,000, and on top of that, they’re having to pay for their overhead in their offices from what they are making, which is far less than \$360,000.

The government would lead you to believe that our doctors are rich, that they’re getting rich out there. Our doctors are leaving Ontario for other jurisdictions.

Mr. Chris Ballard: No, they’re not. Balderdash.

Mr. Todd Smith: Over the last couple of months, I had two doctors leave Belleville to head to British Col-

umbia. The member from Newmarket–Aurora can say “balderdash” all he wants. That’s a fact: Young doctors are leaving Ontario for other jurisdictions because of the cuts that this government is imposing on them. I don’t know if they have no idea what’s going on in their ridings, but their doctors are getting up and leaving for other jurisdictions.

We have a real, serious health care problem on our hands as a result of the cuts that have been made to the doctors’ salaries. Health cuts are happening to our doctors. They’re happening in our hospitals. Quinte Health Care has had to cut almost 200 employees in the latest round of cuts there. It’s happening. For them to try and pull the wool over the eyes of the public is incredulous to me, because it’s happening in our communities. Our health care is being cut.

So they can stand here and they can say whatever they want about investing in health care. It’s not happening. They need to manage our health care system better, not continue to throw money at it and not cut in the places where cuts shouldn’t be occurring, and that’s on the front lines.

That was the resounding message I heard over and over again when I met with doctors over the holiday period: The cuts that they are making aren’t being made in the right places. They’re happening on the front lines in our health care system. Our system is loaded—bloated—with bureaucracy, but are they nibbling away in there? No, no, no. They’re cutting front-line nurses and they’re cutting the salaries of our doctors in Ontario, the people who actually provide health care, yet they’re continuing to build the bureaucracies in our health care system.

I also had the opportunity to spend a lot of time on the ground in Whitby–Oshawa during the recent by-election. I probably went door to door five different days. Some of them were colder than others. Some of them were really, really cold; others were not bad. But what I did hear over and over again—and I congratulate our newest MPP, Lorne Coe, who will be arriving in the next couple of days. What I heard over and over again was the disgust that people had for the current Liberal government, specifically the Premier of Ontario. There was an outrage against the things that have gone on in Ontario and in Whitby–Oshawa: the cuts that have been made to health care, as I’ve documented already, and the rising cost of electricity, and the decision that was made to sell off Hydro One without any mandate to sell it off. People are furious.

You know what? Maybe, finally, the Premier got the message on February 11 that people expect more from this government. They cannot continue to believe this government. If you heard any of the advertisements that the Liberal government put out during the recent by-election—my goodness. It’s unbelievable, what these guys were saying.

The Premier of Ontario—now that coal has been completely phased out in Ontario, an initiative that was actually started by the previous Conservative government and was completed by this government, a decision that

was supported by all parties in the Legislature—to phase out coal.

0920

What does this government, what does this Liberal Party decide to do in their advertisements in Whitby–Oshawa? The Premier was saying that if you don't support the Liberal candidate in Whitby–Oshawa, then the other parties are going to go back to burning coal. That is an out-and-out lie, Mr. Speaker. It's a lie, and for some reason she was able to get away with it.

Well, no. Hold on. She wasn't able to get away with it. She wasn't able to get away with it because—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order: Minister?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I have much respect for my good friend from Prince Edward–Hastings, but I think maybe he's bordering on language that's not parliamentary. I want to listen to him finish his speech, so maybe we could just get some guidance from you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I appreciate your input, and I do believe that the member was questioning some of the legality and truth of statements that were made in Whitby–Oshawa, and certainly it's up for debate. At this point, I will not cut him off, but if he goes any further, we'll talk about it.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And you know what? There was debate on this issue in the Legislature when it comes to phasing out coal in Ontario. It was started by the Ontario PC Party and finished by the Ontario Liberal government, and now coal is no longer burned to produce power in Ontario.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd appreciate less talk from the peanut gallery, and the member would want to get back in his seat if he wants to yell.

Continue.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Speaker. I'm sorry for the interruption as well, but he can't help himself sometimes.

In Whitby–Oshawa, I was going door to door and I would see, stuck in the crack of the door—when a Liberal canvasser had maybe come ahead of me or had gone to a door ahead of me—a flyer there, and it showed large stacks with smoke coming out of them, saying that the only party that was committed to phasing out coal in Ontario was the Liberal Party of Ontario.

I was here in this Legislature when we voted against that, I was here when the NDP voted against burning coal and I was here when the government did, too. You know what? All three parties in this Legislature agree that coal should no longer be burned in Ontario to create power. But what were they saying in their ads? You know what I think? People of Ontario are finally sick and tired of the lies from this party and this government.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All right. I gave the member some leeway, and now he's accusing the whole party of lying. You will withdraw that.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'll withdraw that, Mr. Speaker.

You know what? People just want to hear the truth. They want to hear an honest debate. But they haven't been getting one. They certainly haven't been getting it through the airwaves, on the radio stations in Whitby and Oshawa, and they certainly weren't getting it in the ads that were coming to their door. People want the truth. They want an honest debate about what's going on in the province of Ontario.

They don't want these games. They told the Liberal Party loud and clear in Whitby–Oshawa that they've had enough of this foolishness, and they sent a PC member to Queen's Park in resounding fashion. I can't wait for Lorne Coe to get here next week. He's going to do a fabulous job representing Whitby–Oshawa.

Going back to electricity rates: Electricity rates have increased 77% over the last five years as a result of the decisions that were made by this government. When we had the Minister of Energy in estimates to question him on what the decisions were, he tried to distance himself from the decisions that were made, in spite of the fact that the Minister of Energy has been a cabinet minister in this government since I've been here and before I arrived here. Yet he's trying to distance himself from the decisions that were made by his own government. It was unbelievable to hear those kinds of things coming from a minister of the crown. It is the Green Energy Act, which Minister Chiarelli was akin to or a part of, that has created the biggest reason for the increase in our electricity rates in Ontario.

The sell-off of Hydro One: We had an opportunity to question the minister for a long period of time on the sell-off of Hydro One, something that this government has no mandate to do. They've already sold off the first 15% of Hydro One in spite of the fact that there has been enormous opposition from the opposition parties, the Tories and the NDP, and there has been huge opposition from the public. Every survey that you have seen, every poll that's come out, indicates that over 75% or 80% or 85% of those polled are against the sell-off of Hydro One. Yet the Premier and this government bury their heads in the sand and continue.

And you know what they're saying, Mr. Speaker? They were telling us for the longest time that the money from the sale of Hydro One was going to pay for infrastructure. They were actually telling people out there that the money that was coming from the sale of Hydro One was going to pay for transit; it was going to pay for health care. I know that the candidate in Whitby–Oshawa was going door-to-door telling people that the proceeds of the sale of Hydro One were going to go to infrastructure and to health care. That is a lie. That is another lie. That money is not going to health care or to infrastructure. That money is going to pay down the deficit. Their own financial statement in the fall indicated as much. That money is not going to pay for one ounce of health care or infrastructure.

Again, they're not telling the people the truth. That's the only way that they can get elected because their record is so horrible. This government's record is terrible.

There's no way that they could actually run on their record, so they have to make things up to make it seem as if they're doing something productive, or that they're the progressive party in the Legislature.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister is holding court over there. Maybe she'd like to take the group outside. It's a little loud.

Continue.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now, where was I? We were talking about infrastructure projects. I can tell you that in my riding over the last couple of months I've had the opportunity to meet with most of the mayors, councillors and CAOs of my municipalities, and I represent 16 municipalities in Prince Edward-Hastings. They all have infrastructure needs; they all have critical infrastructure needs.

I'm thinking of Highway 62 just north of Maynooth on the way to Barry's Bay in the Ottawa Valley. Highway 62 is in desperate need of a total remake, a total redo. They've applied for money under the Small Communities Fund and the OCIF, and like almost every municipality in my riding, they received a form letter telling them that they had been denied to move on to the next phase to get the funding that they need for the projects that are required in their municipalities. The government will say that they're putting all of this money into infrastructure. They re-announce the same pool of money budget after budget, but not much ever really gets done.

I know there are concerns in rural Ontario that the infrastructure money that the government has to spend isn't actually going to be spent in rural Ontario. These are real concerns that the municipal politicians in rural Ontario have and that they're experiencing. There are, I believe, 78 projects that have been approved by the ministry in the Small Communities Fund. Only 10 of those are actually for infrastructure projects, for roads, and there are a lot of highways out there that need to be replaced. They don't have the trust—and you can understand why, given what I've said over the last 15 minutes—that this government is actually going to do what it said it's going to do and spend the money to fix the projects that need to be fixed.

0930

They're putting load restrictions on Highway 62 right now for the big loads of timber that are making their way in from the Ottawa Valley to be processed. It's causing a real problem for the movement of goods. We don't even need to bring up the Nipigon bridge and the disaster that's happened in northern Ontario there.

They have no faith that this government is going to deliver the funding for the infrastructure projects they need, and they don't have a lot of faith, if they do deliver the infrastructure money, that it's going to be built properly. The faith from the public is lacking when it comes to the promises of this government.

As I wrap up, let's talk about the ORPP. I heard an awful lot about it from businesses in my riding over the

last two months. The ORPP is causing more fear and worry out there for small businesses in my community.

Small businesses really are the backbone of rural eastern Ontario. It's those small businesses that actually create the jobs with the best wages. You think of the McDonald's jobs or the fast food jobs, or you think of the Walmart jobs, but there are actually business people in our communities—construction, trades—those small businesses where their employees are making good money. There are a lot of those jobs out there. The owners of those businesses are concerned. The employees who work at those businesses are concerned because the last thing they can afford right now is more money being taken off their monthly or biweekly paycheque.

Everything else is getting more expensive. The cost of electricity to heat their homes keeps going up. The people who are contacting my office about the price of electricity are at wits' end. They just simply can't continue to pay the increases.

We were talking about Hydro One and the fact that Hydro One is sold. The first thing that the new board at Hydro One did was apply for a rate increase, and they got it. On February 1, the price of electricity went up another 1.9%. Backtrack to the 1st of January, when the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit was taken off: The 10% savings was taken off your residential hydro bill. That was a 10% increase on the hydro bills of every person who gets their electricity, their energy, their heat from Hydro One. Tack on another 1.9% in February. It's getting to the point where people can no longer afford to pay for their heat and their hydro.

So what does the government want to do? They come in with this plan to take more money off the paycheques of people in their ORPP, when they simply can't afford it. Businesses want to continue to hire. They can't do it. A lot of them tell us that they're going to be eliminating staff as a result of this.

These things are well intentioned, I think, Mr. Speaker; I really do. I believe they're well intentioned, but they just don't know how to implement them without causing more damage to our economy and to the people who live and work in Ontario.

Everybody believes that we should have more when we retire. Everybody believes in that concept. It all comes down to the implementation, and the people of Ontario have lost faith in this government to ever get it right.

So let me recap. We had the opportunity to speak to a couple of different ministers—as was outlined by the Minister of Agriculture when he spoke—during the estimates committee. They talked about being open and transparent. There's another word that we need, and that's "honest." We need honesty. We need honesty now from this government. The people of Whitby-Oshawa have clearly indicated that they have had enough of the games of this government. It's time to get honest with the people of Ontario.

Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House. This is my first opportunity to speak in this House since we came back.

With your indulgence, I'd just like to take a moment. There was a very serious accident in my riding on February 14, a little bit after 6 o'clock in the morning. Two young men in my riding, Maxime Beaulac and Daniel Germain, died tragically in a highway accident close to the town of Earlton. I'd like to express our condolences to their families, on behalf of all the people in this House. I don't think there's any greater pain than having your child taken away in their prime of life. I think the only people who understand a pain like that are those people who have experienced that.

I'd also like to express our thoughts to the driver of the tractor-trailer, a 59-year-old person from Cobalt, whose life will forever be changed by the events of that morning.

Thank you for the time, Speaker.

Now I'd like to talk about what the issue is today. It's the concurrence in supply. Basically, we are here to discuss a motion that needs to be passed so that the government can pay its bills. That's basically what we're doing here—for the folks at home, and for the folks in my neck of the woods, some of whom do listen at home. You have to try really hard, because you can't get it on TV in my part of the world. You really have to be dedicated to look at this at home.

Part of this process is called the estimates. The government did a good job of explaining how it's supposed to function. It comes from the Westminster process. What it really is supposed to do is—the legislators get to pick a few ministries, and we get to grill the ministers on questions of the day, questions that should be important to their constituents, questions that are important to their constituents. The ministers do their best to answer the questions or to evade the questions. I think that's a fair statement.

The problem with that process, and the problem we have come to recognize with this whole process, is that this government seems much more interested in the public relations aspect of government than actually the governance aspect of government. There's a big difference, Speaker. There's a huge difference.

One of the ministries that came up before us was energy. Energy is a huge issue in this province. In my riding, it's number one or number two, mainly because of the cost of electricity. It's an essential service. There are lots of people in my riding who have no access to natural gas. They have access to heating oil, and heating oil has gone down a little bit, but for the last couple of years, it has been very expensive. They have to heat with hydro.

I felt sorry for the people last week in Toronto when it was minus 26 because it's humid down here at 26. But when it was 26 below in Toronto last week, it was 44 below in front of my house. You know what? I burn with wood. My house is pretty warm. But when I'm 75 or 80, I won't be able to burn with wood anymore. The only thing I'll be able to use, and the only thing that many of

my constituents can use, is electricity, and the cost keeps going up and up and up and up.

This government's biggest move on electricity has been to announce the sale of Hydro One. Now, there are two big problems with the sale of Hydro One. You lose control of your transmission system, which is a huge, huge problem, but you're also selling something that actually brings money, brings funds, to the government. Anybody who has ever been in business knows that when you start selling the things that actually bring money into your coffers, that's the beginning of the end. That's the beginning of the end. When the dairy farmer starts selling the cows to pay the feed bill, that's the beginning of his end, or her end. That is also the beginning of this government's end. It's a political pivot point.

0940

What's really, really frustrating is how the game pieces change in this political game. When the Conservatives tried to sell our hydro system and were kind of successful and the people stopped them mid-job, the NDP fought them and the Liberals fought them. Now the Liberals are trying to finish what the Conservatives started, and the NDP is fighting them and, for some reason beyond my comprehension, the Conservatives are fighting them.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, do you know why?

Interjection: No, why?

Hon. James J. Bradley: They want to sell the whole thing.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, but why is the government going ahead with something so foolish? They're selling income.

What's most galling is that we hear from this government that they're selling Hydro One to pay for this massive infrastructure investment that we are going to do. In my part of the world, we see that the massive infrastructure investment is the closure of the New Liskeard train station—the New Liskeard bus station. It was a train station, but they closed the train; now it's a bus station and they just closed the bus station.

Again, we go back to the PR part. A few of us in northern Ontario read the Toronto Star and the Toronto Sun, and there's the UP Express, which cost a lot of money to build and there are no riders. They need to make a few changes to get more ridership.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's a nice train, though.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's a nice train.

Miss Monique Taylor: And it's diesel.

Mr. John Vanthof: And it's diesel. I'm not that upset about the diesel part, personally.

No one is saying we have to close the UP Express because it doesn't pay for itself, but that's what they're saying about buses in northern Ontario. They closed the train, the Northlander, to save \$12 million a year. How many millions of dollars a year could we save by closing the UP Express? Do I want to do that? No. Do I believe that the people in the GTA need a good public transit system? Absolutely. But the people in northern Ontario also deserve an equitable transportation system.

Did I say “equal”? No. Do I expect a subway between Haileybury and New Liskeard? No. Do I expect that seniors in my riding can actually make it to a doctor’s appointment in Toronto without having to spend two days in a hotel? Yes, because we used to have that under this government.

Every time this government talks about an improvement to infrastructure, we seem get a cut in public service in northeastern Ontario. That is what is so frustrating. If they just came out and said, “Look, we’re going to do this and this and this, but it sucks to be you”—but that’s not what they say. What we see and what they say is so much different than what actually happens. That’s what’s frustrating. That destroys faith in all government, because what they’re saying is not what’s happening.

Another one: winter road maintenance. Again, we’ve been doing winter road maintenance for as long as—MTO is 100 years old; we had a ministerial statement about it yesterday. We’ve been cleaning roads maybe not for 100 years, but close to it. I’ve been standing here for four years, and we’ve been saying for at least four years that winter road maintenance in many parts of northern Ontario is not what it was 10 years ago. The Auditor General came out and said, “You know what? That’s true,” and now the government has made some changes. We don’t know if those changes are working yet.

I do distinctly remember saying that with these private contracts—and I’m not against the contractors. It’s the contracts, designed by this government, that force the contractors to bid so low that they can’t maintain the standards.

But there’s a caveat to this. The reason this is going to work is because if the contractor doesn’t make the standard, we can fine them. We’re going to fine them. Yesterday we read in some of our esteemed newspapers that emanate from the GTA that the government would like the contractors to go to arbitration, because they’re not paying their fines. So, again, why does this government continue to say things that they know aren’t going to happen?

Health care: I listened to the Premier and I listened to the Minister of Health saying that there are no cuts in health care, that everything is fine: “We’re making adjustments. We’ve got a new focus. We’ve got all these things.” Hospital budgets are frozen in my riding, as they are in other ridings. When you freeze something, when you freeze the top line and everything else is rising, you leave these people no choice: They have to make cuts. I get people coming into my office who have cuts in home care. They have to wait months and months for basic surgical procedures. Yet this government stands there and says, “No, no, no, you guys are all wrong. You don’t understand. You don’t know what’s going on.” That is not the truth. The people of Ontario do know what’s going on, and what’s going on isn’t the same as what the government says is going on.

I’m going to give you another prime example, and we’re not going to agree with the PCs on this one. We believe that people should have a good pension. We

believe that. No one thinks about a pension when they’re 30 or 40. But when we have people coming to my office when they’re 60 or 65—and especially now, when there are more precarious part-time jobs than ever before, and you’re never going to get a pension on a part-time job. So the government comes out: “We are going to have the ORPP, and it’s going to be fantastic. Vote for us, folks.” Again, you know what? It sounds perfect.

Do you remember the ads? Do you remember the ad where the guy is running over the stream? There’s the bridge, and then he’s jumping. You remember that? He’s just jumping—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The bridge was actually still up.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, and the bridge is building as he’s going. Well, guess what? They have now delayed it for a year. Is the next ad going to be the bridge coming back? No, that ad is not coming down the pipe, folks.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Some \$600,000 for that.

Mr. John Vanthof: Some \$600,000 for that, during the election campaign.

But that’s the problem. They say they do things for PR purposes and, a lot of the time, with very little intention of actually proceeding. They’re more interested in playing political games, and that is hurting the people of Ontario. The people of Ontario know that things are not getting better.

I think I speak for parents across the province: It’s every parent’s dream to have their children do equal or better than they’ve done—financially, physically, mentally. Waves of immigrants have come to this province with that goal in mind, and they’ve succeeded—many, including my parents and including my wife. But it’s becoming increasingly obvious that that may no longer be possible in the future.

0950

This government is putting up a facade of all the great things that they’re going to do, and it’s becoming more and more and more obvious that it’s a facade. People, Ontarians across the province, I believe—certainly Ontarians in my part of Ontario are very proud Ontarians, but we don’t believe that this government really knows what’s going on in our part of the world.

When I have people come into my office who are 70, own their own home and are being driven out of their own home because they can’t afford to heat it, that’s not my Ontario. When I hear ads on the radio—I can’t even remember what the program is called anymore. The Ontario electrical—help me out, folks.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: OESP, the Ontario Electricity Support Program.

Mr. John Vanthof: The Ontario Electricity Support Program, and all the ads about how this is going to help. If you have two people in the home and you make under \$28,000, I think it’s 30 bucks a month. That is not going to keep people in their homes.

That’s something that has to be addressed. It has to be, Speaker, because those are the people I represent and they are the tip of the iceberg. There are a lot of people who are going to face that in the future, and we need to

stand up for those people. Government actually has to be accountable and not just say nice things to keep getting re-elected.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Kitchener-Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker; just in the nick of time, I suppose.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to concurrence in supply following our extensive deliberations on the estimates committee. You know, Speaker, the estimates committee provides an opportunity for us as legislators to perform one of the most fundamental of our responsibilities: Government seeks consent on its annual expenditure program.

Of course, the committee is responsible for reviewing the estimates of at least six, but not more than 12, ministries or government offices each year. This year, the committee selected to hear from the Ministries of Energy, Health, Economic Development, Aboriginal Affairs, Francophone Affairs and Finance. Today, of course, I'll be focusing most of my comments on the deliberations within the Ministry of Health.

I've had a great opportunity, as a member over the last four years, to be an active member on the estimates committee. Before I get moving on to this year's estimates committee, I will say that I recall my former colleague Rob Leone, the member for Cambridge, and I in estimates committee when we were doing the Ministry of Energy. Actually, my seatmate here, Rick Nicholls, the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex, was also with us. That's really where the gas plants started to come out. We all remember that.

Minister Bentley, the member from London West, was there throughout the committee. I remember that the finance minister then was Dwight Duncan; the member from Vaughan was also in committee. That's really where things started when it came to the gas plants and filing the contempt motion and all those things, and we're still seeing that flow through the courts. We talk about it daily: the billion dollars that was wasted on those gas plants.

Speaker, I know you just wanted to hear a little snippet there on my previous involvement in estimates, and I'll carry on with this year's estimates committee. I would like to note that I find it interesting that one day before we have the privilege to speak to the concurrence in supply debate and discussions stemming from many days of committee meetings, and a full couple of months after those committee deliberations concluded—it was just yesterday that we actually received answers to some of the committee members' outstanding questions, questions that were left unanswered until the day before we're going to discuss the committee's work.

As usual, we see this government waiting until the last minute to provide the answers we deserve as elected members and that the people of Ontario deserve as tax-paying members of this province. The answers that we did receive, both in committee and sent across in emails, continue to raise the concerns that brought our questions forward in the first place.

I think back to the hours we devoted to considering the Ministry of Health estimates and to the questions from my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound with regard to this government's cut to physiotherapy. He noted the first-hand stories from seniors telling him they're not getting the services. The fact is, Speaker, as my colleague will say, the number of appointments was cut back to 12. They used to maybe get around 40, and of course they're getting 12 now. I had an opportunity to host a round table in my riding some time ago on this, and we heard about some of the significant concerns from folks who were recovering from—whether it be a fall—who were getting individualized care and were now forced into a group. They were actually falling back in terms of their progress. He added that it's not an increase in service; it's actually a decrease. Despite the contentions of ministry staff at committee, I would have to say that my basic math would also indicate that going from 40 appointments down to 12 is actually a decrease.

Further concerning during our meetings with the Ministry of Health were issues my colleague aired with regard to Alzheimer's and other dementias. Specifically, he was wondering about the target set in 2013 to implement a prevention program to help seniors living with Alzheimer's and other dementias. A series of four more questions were asked about this prevention program, and we are still waiting for answers—again, yes, waiting.

He asked how many of the targeted 629 long-term-care homes in Ontario have implemented this program to date. How much was targeted to allow them to implement these programs to date? How much was actually spent of what they had actually budgeted to do? And if you didn't spend all of the money, then where did the money go? Speaker, I regret to report that those questions are still unanswered. In fact, in the set of answers to outstanding questions we received yesterday, we were told that “the ministry is not clear on the specific initiative being referred to.”

Here we are, months after my colleague asked the questions, with no answers and with continued concerns on where our money is going at the Ministry of Health and why that money seems to be failing to address our health care priorities—in this case, the long-term-health-care needs of our senior citizens impacted by dementias and Alzheimer's.

It was a similar set of concerns that I attempted to address in questioning the minister and his staff with regard to rare-disease access to treatment here in the province of Ontario. I asked the minister about patients suffering from EDS and the working group he formed after we first wrote him letters on behalf of Ontario residents suffering from EDS. While the minister did indicate that a working group would be reporting back to him, I would note that I also asked if he or his staff could provide upcoming meeting dates and timelines. After going through yesterday's package of outstanding questions, I would have to say that one is still outstanding and I'm waiting for that information.

I ask the question because, again, we have concerns on this side of the House on the spending of our health care

dollars and ensuring that they go to provide Ontario residents with the access to public health care treatment that they expect and that, in fact, they deserve. For far too long, rare-disease sufferers, those who suffer from EDS or PKU—those patients I mentioned to the minister among them—have faced endless hurdles to diagnosis, to referrals or out-of-country treatment by approved medications due to their smaller numbers and higher relative treatment costs. The fact is, these are people of Ontario just like you or me, and the higher cost shouldn't mean that rare-disease sufferers are abandoned by a government that leaves them to fund their own medical expenses.

I'm hopeful that will change, hopefully in time for our next series of estimates meetings, where the minister can detail the new provincial strategy for rare-disease treatment across Ontario. That's next year, though. In the meantime, we'll spend what time we have left this morning to continue discussing this year's health ministry estimates.

While there was a lot of discussion regarding government investment into nurses and doctors in our province, there continues to be a sense that, despite the response we received at committee, some things are just not adding up.

1000

Our health critic from Elgin–Middlesex–London asked about cuts to doctor services, indicating a total of “over \$815 million alone to doctor services being cut from this government.” Again, concern remains in that area, as the minister contended, “I would argue against any characterization of what took place as ‘cuts.’” Yet, despite the denials, we continue to see evidence to the contrary.

Of course, we see the same thing when it comes to cuts to our nurses: deny, while nursing positions continue to be slashed at hospitals right around the province. In fact, the Ontario Nurses' Association claimed just last month that 770 registered nursing jobs were cut in 2015 as hospitals struggled to balance their budgets.

Those layoffs show no sign of stopping this year either. I know there was news out of Windsor of nurse layoffs right around the time that we were dealing with our own concerns in the Kitchener area after a layoff announcement at Grand River Hospital: 68 positions eliminated at Grand River Hospital, 68 fewer people to continue the good work at Grand River Hospital to look after the health of the people in our community. That's too bad, because Ontario can do better to ensure health care is a government priority.

Sadly, we continue to see, both at estimates and every day in this House, the continued toll from ongoing wasted spending that has taken funding from where it's most needed and led to cuts throughout the province. The Premier was elected on a promise of no cuts to front-line health care workers, and yet again and again we see the complete opposite, with Grand River being the latest to announce cuts: 30 vacant positions being slashed and layoff notices given to 38 others, including nurses.

Make no mistake: These cuts fall at the feet of the Liberal government and its fiscal mismanagement. Unfortunately, when billions are wasted on gas plants and non-existent eHealth registries, it means less for the priorities we all share.

You know, Speaker, I recall, and I was reading this morning, how soon after the election of Dalton McGuinty they brought in a health premium that needed to go to health care to make our system better, and yet it fell to general revenues, buying gas plants that we don't need and other things that I'm sure we all can remember. Quite frankly, there is an ongoing concern with the way this government handles its money, and the spending choices made for our health sector continue to highlight that concern.

While our questions of the ministry at estimates provided little further information on cuts or nursing job loss, the denials couldn't hide the fact that this provincial government received \$652 million through the Canada Health Transfer in 2015, but only a portion of those funds was put into Ontario's health care system, with \$54 million being funnelled from that transfer to another ministry. So we see what's going on. We may not have gotten the answers at estimates, but we see it in the real-life layoffs and cuts in our communities.

And we're not the only ones to see what's going on here. In fact, as he was announcing the 68 positions being eliminated, Grand River Hospital CEO Malcolm Maxwell noted in a memo to staff that “given the province's financial situation, I do not foresee the situation becoming any easier.”

The local hospital cuts follow a series of government decisions that have seen five consecutive years of frozen hospital budgets despite a growing population; physician services slashed three times last year, for a total of \$815 million; a \$50-million cut from physiotherapy for seniors; and 50 residency positions cut, when 800,000 Ontarians are still without a family doctor.

As I said, we may not have received many details from the ministry, but the situation in our health care sector is as clear as the weekly headlines announcing the latest cost concerns.

We've had other ministries into committee, of course. We had an opportunity to spend some time with the Ministry of Economic Development and Employment. We'll not need to look any further than the recent Auditor General's report highlighting how many of the programs that were brought forward by the Ministry of Economic Development, in fact, invited people to apply for a lot of those grants.

Of course, in Ottawa, they typically give a loan. Here in Ontario, we give a grant. It was a select few that were in fact invited to apply to these things. Many small business people throughout the province always ask, “We don't have the resources to apply, or to hire high-priced lobbyists to apply, for a lot of these things. How come it just can't be fair for everyone?”

We saw how millions, if not tens of millions, of dollars were given to companies—large companies, in

fact, like Cisco—that recently then laid off people in the province of Ontario. In our own community, we appreciate and value the work that those at OpenText do. But I know there were also questions surrounding the government's program of financial aid to OpenText, and whether those jobs have in fact been created or not.

We never get a really substantial answer from the ministry in those cases. I know the minister did his ultimate best to explain the programs they did. We also got into the situation over at MaRS and the fact that tens of millions, if not more, have been spent or invested over at the MaRS building, with little to no return. In fact, if you walk over to the building today, you'll still see vacant space.

I know my colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington had an opportunity to speak to the minister and question him in this last session of estimates, which leads me also to the fact that a lot of the agencies, boards, and commissions that these ministries represent haven't been filing their annual reports on time. There hasn't been full disclosure to Ontarians in terms of how their hard-earned tax money is spent.

With that, Speaker, that's my few minutes on estimates and the issue of concurrence, so I'll wrap it up with that, I guess.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to have a little bit of time on the clock to address the concurrence in supply motion.

Before I begin, Speaker, I want to give a shout-out to our colleague, my partner in good work, in Windsor–Tecumseh. Percy Hatfield is recovering from knee surgery. He's at home, watching us all on TV intently, so everybody give him a big wave. Hi, Percy. We can't wait until you're back in here, and I'm sure—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Is he really watching?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: He is; he was texting us. I'm sure that if he had the ability today to stand and speak to the supply motion, he would have something prophetic or even poetic to say. I will be maybe a lot more crass in my remarks here.

Frankly, the government, to this point, has continued on a pattern of failing this province in every measurable way, and people are seeing it more than they ever have. Perhaps it's because we have an old, tired government—14 years. You get stale. You get into a pattern. We're seeing it time and time again, where backbench members can yell total nonsense from their seats, not making one solid, valid point, and not standing up and adding to this debate. People outside of this place are seeing it. They're seeing a government with no vision, with a reluctance to consult with the people that are affected by their policies.

I'll give you one fact here. This is a fact that's disputable: Today it's reported that the government and the finance minister will release the budget next week. We had pre-budget consultations. They went into various communities across this province. They came down to Windsor, and I'll talk about that a little bit. But the

budget will be released and presented in this House without having the finance committee submit a report to this House—

Interjection: Not tabling it.

Mr. Taras Natyshak:—without tabling a report that encompasses the thoughts, the visions, the concerns of all Ontarians. You are ignoring completely the time that went into that. Frankly, you don't care about what the people in this province are concerned about. You're ignoring it completely. You're signalling that through introducing this budget. To argue that fact, Speaker, is indisputable.

1010

So what does that say to people in our communities? It says, frankly, that they know best. They know what the priorities of this province should be. They don't care about consultation; they don't care about the issues that our communities face. One of the issues we heard through the budget deliberations in the finance committee was that access to health care, one of the fundamental pillars of our society and our province, is becoming less and less accessible. People are concerned about primary care. The ability to find a doctor in their community still looms heavily, especially in remote and rural areas of this province, where doctors are reluctant to set up.

The access to long-term care: Seniors can't find a bed, a place to go. Despite all of the rhetoric we hear from the government on making any progress or effort on that, there still is a crisis. Long-term care, where we know there has to be an emphasis on investment, continues to drag along and to not play the vital role in the system that we know it could, because the government continues to play games with our overall system, given and juxtaposed under a Ministry of Finance that has frozen health care spending for the last five years. In real-term, real-day dollars, that's an absolute cut.

Small and medium-sized hospitals are faced with stagnant budgets and increased costs. What are they to do? They've cut everywhere they can. I can tell you, I'm working with our health care leaders and administrators in Windsor and Essex county, and they'll show you the books. They'll show you where they've made the most efficiencies. In fact, any metrics will show you that they are very efficient in the overall delivery of health care. Given that they can't run a deficit—they're mandated, legislated, not to run a deficit—they have to cut front-line care, and that is directly on your conscience, or it should be, because it affects the health outcomes of our constituents in our communities.

We're seeing it every day. We're hearing the calls, but it's a government that doesn't care, and that's again reflected in the fact that they won't even table the report from the finance committee before they release the budget. We don't know what's going to be in there, we don't know what their priorities are, but we can ensure and we can be assured that they certainly won't reflect the needs and desires of Ontarians.

Speaker, I think you're giving me a little bit of a head nod because time is running—one or two minutes; it's tough to judge.

I'll give you one example of where we've seen the fiscal prudence of this government. This highlights, again, how inept they've been. The Pan Am Games, by all accounts from the government and the minister of the Pan Am Games, were wildly successful. We learned, after the Pan Am Games ended, that the government saw fit to commission a hair salon for athletes at the Pan Am Games to the tune of \$140,000 for two months. Is that how much it actually cost? In your mind, is that what haircuts cost these days? Folks in my area certainly aren't paying their salons \$140,000 or \$70,000 a month for access to beauty supplies. Maybe some members of the backbench actually think that's reasonable.

On an annualized basis, that's \$840,000. I asked the CEO of Windsor Regional Hospital, David Musyj, "What would you do with an extra \$840,000?" He said, "I would apply it directly to front-line care." That's where the priority is on the ground in communities, but by the Liberals' standards, they think it's important to ensure that there's access to manicures, pedicures and hair-cutting services, not front-line nurses. How do you live with yourselves when your government is making decisions like that, and how do you go back to your communities and actually make a case for a hair salon to the tune of \$140,000? It's reprehensible and it's an indication of a total collapse of confidence in this government and their fiduciary responsibilities.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before we begin, I'd like to mention to all members that we've got a very long list of introductions to do, so I would ask that you make your introductions and only your introductions, and we'll get through this all together. We also have to introduce our pages, and we're doing a special tribute today. The more we all co-operate and get this done, the better and the quicker.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I would like to introduce Mrs. Pat Bhola, the mother of one of our pages today, Tristan Bhola, from Sarnia-Lambton.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: We have representatives from Ontario credit unions here with us today who held a breakfast this morning and are meeting with MPPs during the course of the day.

I would like to welcome Antero Elo from the Finnish Credit Union; Brent Zorgdrager from the Mennonite Savings and Credit Union; Kerry Hadad from Your Neighbourhood Credit Union; from Libro Credit Union, Steve Bolton, Fred Blaak and Ralph Luimes; and from Momentum Credit Union, Malcolm Stoffman.

Also, I would like to welcome Megan McIver. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to welcome a proud mother from the riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, Rima

Mastronardi, who's here today to watch her daughter Delaney, who is our page captain. The Mastronardis are a proud page family, as I recall having the honour of introducing them a few years ago when their daughter Dominique was a captain. Rima is joined today by her friends Deeanne and McKenzie Cervini. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I too had the pleasure to meet with representatives of the credit unions. I want to welcome Taras Pidzamecky as well as Antero Elo—one is from the Ukrainian Credit Union and the other from the Finnish Credit Union. Very interesting talk. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to introduce page captain Laura de Souza's family: her mother, Connie de Souza; her father, Jan de Souza; and her brother, Nicholas de Souza. They are in the public gallery. Please join me in welcoming them to the House.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome a few special guests today. We have Eben James, Sr.—his lovely wife Gwen is here—and Eben James, Jr. in the gallery as well, with a lot of other guests from Quinte West.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome my hard-working staff to Queen's Park today: Shannon Mitchell, Josh Upper and Ryan Donnelly. Welcome.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'm very pleased to welcome, in the gallery, the mother of our page from the wonderful riding of Ottawa-Orléans, Mrs. Robin Boulé.

I would like to welcome our page, Jordan Boulé, who will be with us for two weeks.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm very excited today because it rarely ever happens. We have a page from Nepean-Carleton: Julia Robertson. Today, we are joined by her father, Glenn Robertson, one of my constituents.

We would like to welcome you to Queen's Park. Thank you for getting out of all the snow in Ottawa today to join us here in Toronto.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Today, I'd like to welcome Marty Gillis and Susan Stockwell Andrews of the Windsor Family Credit Union, who are joining us today here at Queen's Park. I hope you didn't have too much of a snowy ride up.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In the members' west gallery today is Bob Lake, who's a director of Kawartha Credit Union and the former president and chief executive officer of Peterborough utility services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to welcome Liliana Mateus-Jimenez, the mother of page Sarah Mateus-Jimenez, who is in the public gallery today.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to welcome the Council of Ontario Universities sitting in the members' gallery, who are here today at Queen's Park for their Research Matters event. I hope to see all members at the event this evening.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome the Quinte region here today—and thanks for being here—specifically Mrs. O'Neil and her family; Mayor Jim Harrison and his wife, Janie; former mayor Williams and his wonderful wife; a number of councillors; and, of course, former member George Smitherman. And I'd be remiss if I did

not introduce my wife, Diane, in the members' gallery. Welcome.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to introduce students from Halton to Queen's Park today. There are students joining us from Holy Trinity Catholic Secondary School in Oakville, grades 9, 10, 11 and 12. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to welcome Libro financial services. Steve Bolton is here from Libro. Welcome to you all. I have to say that all credit unions are wonderful; Libro is especially wonderful. Welcome.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, all credit unions are wonderful. I welcome them all to the Legislature, particularly a representative from my riding, Ralph Luimes.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As I indicated to you, we have a couple of things to do today. I'm going to ask that our new pages assemble to be introduced: from Essex, Andrew Garro; from Perth-Wellington, Andrew Johnson; from Ajax-Pickering, Bianca Nicole Padilla; from Niagara West-Glanbrook, Charlotte Fritz; from Chatham-Kent-Essex, Delaney Mastronardi; from Whitby-Oshawa, Dhruv Upadhyay; from York West, Erin Doan; from York-Simcoe, Jessie Popowich; from Ottawa-Orléans, Jordan Boulé; from Nepean-Carleton, Julia Robertson; from Richmond Hill, Laura de Souza; from Barrie, Luke Bentley; from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Micah Tamminga; from London West, Owen Davies; from Thornhill, Richard Fan; from Guelph, Ryan Eggens; from St. Catharines, Sarah Mateus-Jimenez; from Scarborough-Rouge River, Sayeem Mahfuz; from Mississauga East-Cooksville, Suzanne Uraiqat; from Sarnia-Lambton, Tristan Bhola; and from Trinity-Spadina, Xavier Hollott-Lo. These are our pages for this year.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As is our new custom, we will be introducing a few of our guests: David Warner, the Speaker for the 35th Parliament, is here with us today to pay tribute; and Mr. George Smitherman, from Toronto Centre. George, welcome.

1040

Would members now please join me in welcoming the family of the late Mr. Hugh Patrick O'Neil, MPP for Quinte during the 30th, 31st, 32nd, 34th and 35th Parliaments, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery? I will introduce a few: his wife, Donna; son, David; his wife, Teresa; daughter, Cathy; her husband, Mitchell; Liam, and family and friends all. Welcome, and thank you for being here.

Applause.

HUGH O'NEIL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Hugh O'Neil, former member for Quinte, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to pay tribute. Do we agree? Agreed.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome all of our guests from the Quinte region who braved the winter weather to get here this morning. It's a long drive as it is through the Toronto commute on a nice day, but to be here in the wintry weather—it's great to have you with us today. I think it speaks volumes to Hugh O'Neil that the Speaker's gallery is packed with his friends and family.

We rise today to pay tribute and say goodbye to "Mr. Quinte." The best politicians, the best people in this Legislature rise above the petty partisanship that sometimes accompanies this profession, and so it was for Hugh Patrick O'Neil. The respect he commanded from his constituents transcended politics. He was their constant champion and a pillar for his community in Quinte, Trenton and Belleville.

The list of honours is long. He was an honorary patron of the Quinte Symphony, an honorary chair of the Loyalist College Foundation board of directors, an honorary colonel at 8 Wing CFB Trenton, an honorary chair for the Quinte Ballet School and a co-chair for the Afghanistan Repatriation Memorial committee. And he was a former cabinet minister, and that's why we're paying tribute here today. He was Minister of Industry, Trade and Technology; then Tourism and Recreation; then Mines; then Culture and Communications from 1985 to 1990. He spent 20 years in this Legislature.

But, first and foremost, he was Donna's husband, David and Cathy's dad and grandpa to four beautiful grandkids.

Even after leaving politics, Hugh was still doing his best for the community in both Trenton and Belleville. It was his efforts and those of Quinte West's then-Mayor John Williams, who joins us today with his beautiful wife, Heather, that brought the Afghanistan Repatriation Memorial to town.

He was also still active here at Queen's Park as well. He was on the board of the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Ontario Arts Council. He was quiet about that.

Hugh was active in causes in Trenton that were at the core of the community that he loved so much. While respect for Hugh knew no party lines, Hugh remained a Liberal to the last. Any time the two of us were at an event where I had the opportunity to speak as the MPP for Prince Edward-Hastings—and there were a lot of times where we would rub shoulders at events at 8 Wing Trenton or other charitable events throughout the community—when I was done speaking, Hugh, putting to use his good heckling skills that he probably learned here, sitting next to Jim Bradley for a number of years, would always say in his Irish baritone, "Pretty good, MPP Smith. Not bad for a Tory."

I also had the opportunity to stand shoulder to shoulder with Hugh at many commemorative events in and

around the Quinte region. I always made sure, though, Mr. Speaker, that if I could, I wouldn't stand next to Hugh if the national anthem was to be sung. I would always try and stand next to Donna. She is the real talent when it comes to singing in the family, part of the St. Peter's Catholic Church choir in Trenton and a beautiful, angelic voice—Hugh not so much, but definitely Donna.

Hugh O'Neil was a man and also, at times, a monument. He was a touchstone for every politician in the area. Being a new politician sitting on a dais next to Hugh O'Neil was kind of like sitting down the bench from Gordie Howe. I know my colleague from Northumberland–Quinte West would agree. His presence was enough to instruct you on how it was supposed to be done. Regardless of your political stripe, Hugh O'Neil could teach you how to be a pro.

Now I'd like to do something that probably doesn't happen all that often here, but I'd like to pay some homage to the legacy that my departed friend left on the history of the party opposite. Anyone who stares at the structure that is the first two terms of Dalton McGuinty's terms of office should be encouraged to dig a little bit below the surface, and if they take a second look at the foundations, they'll find that one of them is Hugh O'Neil.

In the gallery today we have two of Mr. O'Neil's former staffers. They are men who are no strangers to this House. One is the former Premier's chief of staff, Peter Wilkinson, and the other is the former Deputy Premier, George Smitherman, who is with us today. I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that a quick conversation with either of these men will reveal the lessons of public service—character under fire and love of your community—that were so central to the Hugh O'Neil that we all knew. Hugh O'Neil's legacy extends well beyond Quinte to the profound impact he left on those who worked with him and the lessons they took from their time with him and applied to how they serve the people of Ontario.

As I tried to think of some way to close this out, I wanted to highlight an example of Hugh getting to his feet in this place and representing the people and the place that he loved so much: Trenton. So I decided to read the last question that he delivered in this House. It was the last opportunity as a member of the official opposition, probably right down here somewhere, that he had to question the government of the day. It was November 30, 1994.

Just to set this up, the day that Hugh O'Neil left this earth, he was protecting Trenton Memorial Hospital in his community as part of a rally that was going on there. Keep this in mind as you listen to his last question to a minister, on November 30, 1994.

Mr. Hugh O'Neil from Quinte in Hansard: "My question today is for the Minister of Health. Minister, back in June of this year, approximately 500 people travelled to Queen's Park from the Trenton area to voice their concerns about the future of the Trenton Memorial Hospital and to ask for your help. At that time we came away feeling hopeful that you would make things happen. It is now the end of November, and we still have not heard from you...."

"Based on reports from the fire department, the city's building department, architects and unions, Trenton Memorial Hospital is in critical condition and the health and safety of staff and patients are at risk as a result. Minister, I ask you to address these matters immediately. What do you intend to do?"

Until his final day, Hugh O'Neil was standing up for his community, and that's why he will forever be known as Mr. Quinte. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

Further tribute?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is my privilege to rise in this Legislature to pay tribute to Hugh O'Neil. I would like to echo the welcome of my colleague to Hugh's family and friends who are filling the galleries here today. Welcome, of course, to his wife, Donna; his daughter, Cathy; his son, David, and wife, Teresa. I am sure that Michelle, Marleigh, Makenna and Liam would be very impressed to see where their grandfather worked for 20 years, representing Quinte communities from 1975 to 1995.

It is my honour, as a newer member in this Legislature, to both pay tribute and to share with my colleagues and the people of Ontario a bit more about a man who truly knew what political service meant. The word "political" is often used to describe behaviour that is seen as perhaps less than favourable. But in many cases—and, I would like to think, the majority—the pursuit of political life is not about personal gain. It comes from the noble desire to serve our communities and is driven by an effort to do our small part to leave our respective corners of the world better than we found them. For the best of us, politics isn't driven by selfishness, but by selflessness and a sense of responsibility to our neighbours.

Taking a look at the life of Hugh O'Neil, it is clear that his kind of politics was the best kind: one that seeks to give back to a community that he was proud to call home, one he was committed to doing all that he could for to make it the best that it could be. To Hugh, community service wasn't a job or a hobby; it was a calling. It was a way of life. Whether it was in an official capacity, such as his 20-year tenure here as MPP, or through one of his many volunteer and community service roles over the years, he dedicated himself to the betterment of Trenton, Belleville and the surrounding Quinte region, which, I might add, is a beautiful region. And it would seem richer for his involvement.

1050

Hugh was active in local clubs, boards and organizations, ranging, as we've heard, from the Quinte Ballet School to the Ontario Trillium Foundation to the Royal Canadian Legion. He had been awarded the Canadian Forces Medallion for Distinguished Service, which is the Canadian military's highest level of recognition for a civilian. Hugh clearly was a man who saw opportunities everywhere around him to be engaged with people and to be a part of strengthening the community around him.

In preparation for today's tribute, it became clear that his dedication to his community and his genuine and

caring approach bridged all kinds of gaps, be they partisan—forging lasting friendships with political adversaries—or generational, as witnessed by his work as a teacher, as an educator, as a principal, and the way he embraced his role as a father and a grandfather.

Today, we see that the galleries are full of people from across communities who have come to pay their respects to a great politician and, as history will attest, an even better man. To his family and friends who have made the trip to Queen's Park for this occasion, we thank you for sharing Hugh with this Legislature and for sharing him with the community.

As legislators, we sit in seats that have been filled by leaders and trailblazers. Hugh was someone who widened those trails for us. His caring, commitment and belief in education, service and community broadened the roads for us in this Legislature and, across his riding, for the people of Quinte region.

When it comes to legacies, it is clear that Hugh O'Neil has left the best kind. His is a legacy of true service and commitment. Thank you, Hugh, for your lifetime of service to the people of Quinte and Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member from Oshawa. The member from Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, Donna, David, Cathy, family and friends of Hugh O'Neil—by the sheer numbers here today, I'm not sure who's left at home minding the place, but thank you for being here.

It is truly a bittersweet occasion for me that I have the opportunity to stand in this place, in this chamber, where our friend and former colleague the honourable Hugh O'Neil served the people of Quinte, and indeed Ontario, with distinction and honour, and to be able to speak of his legacy with a tribute to almost 20 years in public life.

I would speak to Hugh on a regular basis. Sometimes it wasn't by my own choice. Normally, I used to call him for some advice on issues facing not just the Quinte region but eastern Ontario and Ontario. He called me just as often, usually with a phrase when I picked up the phone: "What the heck are you doing, Rinaldi?" He set me straight pretty quick; he didn't hold back. He was a huge advocate for his community, something I strive to live up to each and every day.

I remember it vividly: It was on a Monday evening that Hugh had called me. Somehow, I didn't get his call, and I returned his call around 9 o'clock or 10 o'clock that night. Yes, he wanted to talk to me about Trenton Memorial Hospital. I believe I was the last person to speak to Hugh besides Donna on that evening. I went to sleep that evening after spending, I would say, about an hour with Hugh—Donna, if I remember correctly—and I was just heading to the office the next morning when I got a phone call from the local media asking me for a comment on the death of Hugh O'Neil. I was shocked. It was about 7 o'clock that morning. I really thought it was some sort of a prank and I didn't take very lightly to that reporter—definitely not a funny one. I asked the reporter if he had his facts correct because I had just talked to Hugh just a few hours prior.

Hugh began his career as an educator, as you heard. He spent time working in real estate and was an active member of the Kiwanis Club of Trenton, an honourable member of the Royal Canadian Legion, an honourable member of the Lions Club, an honourable member of the Kinsmen Club and member of the Knights of Columbus.

His political career began in 1975, winning the Quinte seat as a Liberal MPP—and frankly, his friends or supporters kept on telling him that he was crazy, that it would never happen. But it happened, Speaker. Hugh spent the next 20 years—six terms, from the 30th to the 35th Parliament—representing his constituents of Quinte and really all of Ontario while sitting on many standing committees, serving on cabinet as Minister of Industry, Trade and Technology; Minister of Tourism and Recreation; Minister of Culture and Communications, and as Minister of Mines.

In 1979, he held the government of the day accountable for the needs for pension reform—you hear that? Pension reform—and gender equality for pay in the workforce. He understood that people should be able to afford to retire after working their whole life, and guess what? After 37 years, we're having the same debate today.

I remember Hugh sharing with me one of his greatest memories, of which there are many, from his time in office as Minister of Tourism and Recreation. We had the opportunity to travel to Seoul, South Korea to cheer on 169 Ontario athletes who were part of the Canadian team. He beamed with pride as he spoke of getting to watch Lennox Lewis be the first Canadian boxer to win gold in the super-heavyweight category, and many other moments as well. When he returned home, he addressed the Legislature and recounted that experience of being in Seoul with the athletes to celebrate while they were playing O Canada.

During his time in office he had the distinct pleasure, as we do today, to serve alongside long-time actively serving members, like the members from St. Catharines, York Centre, Ottawa West—Nepean, Wellington—Halton Hills, Timmins—James Bay and Simcoe—Grey. I'm sure that you will have lots of memories of Hugh. Hugh's most admirable asset was that, like every successful politician, he was able to work collaboratively with members of all political stripes for the betterment of his community, including when he worked with the opposition government to rehabilitate Highway 33 just north of Trenton.

Since his retirement in 1995, Hugh continued his hard work for the community. Supporting his passion for the arts, he served on the Ontario Arts Council and the Ontario Arts Foundation. Now each year, the Quinte Arts Council awards two Hugh P. O'Neil Student Arts Bursaries, one each for the public and Catholic school boards serving the Quinte region. He also proudly served as vice-chairman of the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

In 2013, Hugh and the former mayor of Quinte West, John Williams, who is here with us today, were recognized by the Canadian Forces and awarded the Can-

adian Forces Medallion for Distinguished Service. The medallion is the military's highest level of recognition for civil service and was awarded for their involvement in spearheading the Afghanistan Repatriation Memorial.

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude, life is short. We need to remember to embrace the good times and special people in our lives. Hugh was one of those special persons. He was my friend, my mentor, someone whom I admired immensely and held in the highest esteem. Hugh loved his community, but he loved his family even more. Donna was the love of his life and sometimes I think she was the MPP, Speaker. He was extremely proud of David and Catherine, and valued above all else the time he spent with his grandkids—and he talked about that.

So Speaker, on behalf of all of us here today, I would like to thank Donna and his family for sharing Hugh with us, not only for the Quinte region but for all of Ontario. The province and the Quinte region are better places to be today because of Hugh.

Speaker, I'm going to take the indulgence, and I know I'm probably going to break some rules, but I hope that you give me some leeway—same with the Sergeant-at-Arms. I want to propose a toast to Hugh O'Neil. His most favourite drink: a glass of ice, Speaker. I know you're not looking. Hugh, this is for you. Cheers.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their heartfelt and genuine comments.

As is now our tradition, a DVD and a copy of Hansard will be provided to the family as a sign of our affection and our respect for Hugh and his commitment to the province of Ontario. Thank you for being with us. If you want to stay for question period, be my guests.

The member from Northumberland—Quinte West, you and I will have a talk outside.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. The people of Whitby—Oshawa sent this government a very clear message: They are tired of the cost of keeping their lights on. The people of Whitby—Oshawa don't support this Hydro One fire sale. I heard those messages at almost every door I knocked on.

It continues to be a disgrace that this Premier ignores families across the province. Whitby—Oshawa told the Premier that life is harder under the Liberals because of their hydro policies, but she won't listen.

Why is the Premier continuing with the Hydro One fire sale despite a very clear signal from across the province and in Whitby—Oshawa that you're offside with the residents of this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Leader of the Opposition is very aware that the building of infra-

structure in this part of the province—in fact, across the province—is of critical concern to every community. If the Leader of the Opposition had the opportunity to speak with mayors across the province, including in the GTHA, he would know that infrastructure is number one on the list. In terms of roads and bridges, transit and transit expansion, those are critical investments that must be made now.

I think that the Leader of the Opposition is also aware that in order to do that there must be funding. So the broadening of the ownership of Hydro One, which is a proposal that in the past the Conservatives might have supported, is part of the plan to build that very, very necessary infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: Quit the spin. You're talking to mayors? Over 200 municipalities have passed resolutions saying they're against the Hydro One fire sale.

In terms of infrastructure, the infrastructure budget prior to the fire sale was \$130 billion; it's \$130 billion after. Not a single cent has been added to infrastructure.

So let's talk about the facts: The Auditor General has said that this government will overcharge the equivalent of \$450 each year for every person in Ontario. That is reflected on every bill. That's about \$40 a month per person. Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've tried to simply ask for order. If I'm not going to get it, I'm going to the individuals and I may go to warnings. We're not starting that way.

Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: The government may trivialize this cost, but to the average family it means a lot. It could mean an extra night at a restaurant; it could mean new shoes for a child at the start of the school year.

Why has the Liberal government made it so much harder for Ontario families to pay their hydro bills? No more spin; no more excuses. Why?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that the Leader of the Opposition knows that it is critical that we make the investments in infrastructure that municipalities across the province are crying for. They know that if they're going to be able to grow their economies, if they're going to be able to attract the jobs that they know they need, those infrastructure investments must be made.

We also know that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My comment was meant for all members, not one side.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand that in order to make these investments, there are decisions that have to be made that are difficult. We understand that on this side of the House. We also understand that if we're going to grow the economy, if Ontario is going to stay a leader in economic growth and job creation in this country, we

must make those investments. That's why we've made this decision.

In terms of electricity prices, there are programs that we have put in place specifically to address the challenges of people who are on a low income. I hope the member of the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: No matter how many times you say it's about infrastructure, your infrastructure budget has not changed.

Let's talk about the facts again. This is because of billions and billions of dollars' worth of your energy scandals. It's the fact that Ontario will be paying neighbouring states and provinces to take our extra energy. In just the first six months of 2015, Ontario paid \$1.1 billion to give away our energy.

Liberal waste and mismanagement are having real consequences for Ontario families and seniors. The consequences are seen every month on Ontario's hydro bills. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier finally take responsibility? Will she admit that Liberal waste and mismanagement are the only reasons we are seeing higher hydro bills?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we will take responsibility for the investments that we are making around this province. We'll take responsibility for the LRT that's being built in Ottawa. We'll take responsibility for the four-laning of Highway 17. We'll take responsibility for the lines that are being built in municipalities across the GTHA. We will take responsibility for the support that we are giving municipalities across the province to invest in infrastructure.

That is the kind of investment that is necessary at this moment. It's necessary for long-term economic growth, but it's also necessary for job creation right now: 110,000 jobs a year, \$134 billion over 10 years to make sure that we are set, in terms of our infrastructure, to compete globally. We are not competing with other jurisdictions in Canada; we are competing with the world. In order for us to be able to do that, we need to make those investments. We're making them, and the Leader of the Opposition has no plan to make those investments.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock.

New question.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier: Since I can't get an answer on energy, I will try something else.

It has been 10 months since the Premier held her first cap-and-trade photo op. The Liberals told us that details would be coming, but no details. Since then, the Premier and her ministers have made multiple announcements that have reminded me of the movie *Groundhog Day*: the same non-announcement time and time again.

Families and businesses want to know the true cost of the cap-and-trade plan. George Smitherman, when he introduced the Green Energy Act, said that it would cost about a dollar a day. The Auditor General has since told us that it's costing people thousands of dollars every single year.

Ontarians deserves to know exactly how much this cap-and-trade proposal will cost them every year. Will the Premier finally provide details and costs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Leader of the Opposition knows full well that we have introduced a strategy. He knows that we are linking our carbon market with Quebec, with California and with Manitoba.

But I cannot imagine, in 2016, a more irresponsible position than a position taken by a politician that says, "We're not going to have a plan to address climate change. We're going to bury our head in the sand and we're going to pretend that we can continue to emit greenhouse gases and that we can do that with impunity"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

1110

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that sometimes it's hard to hear the heckles.

This is about taking decisive action. We've shut down all the coal-fired plants. We're taking the next steps. The fact that the Leader of the Opposition has no plan to address climate change—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: That's exactly what we're talking about: There is no plan. Everyone in Ontario is asking: Will the Premier finally introduce details to show Ontario that you have a plan? That's precisely our worry.

The government has talked about cap-and-trade since 2008—not a single detail. You've made countless announcements since last April, but no details. We have asked to see an economic analysis of cap-and-trade—nothing. We've asked for details on carbon credits—nothing. We've even asked the most basic question of what it will cost Ontario families in increased costs for food and heating. Alberta's Premier released details on the very first day they announced it, but in Ontario, nothing. Why do we get nothing from the Liberals? If you have a plan, you won't hide it.

Families need time to plan. Businesses need time to budget. Will you provide details at some point, or is this another Liberal secret that you're going to hide from the people of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I trust that the Leader of the Opposition will read our climate change strategy that sets specific targets and demonstrates how we are going to reach that 80% below 1990 levels by 2020. The fact is that the plan is being designed, and as we come up with the design features, we put those into the public realm.

What is really important, and I think people need to understand that, is that underlying this question is an assumption that we don't need to do anything; that as a society, we can just sit back and we can continue to emit greenhouse gases; that we don't have to take responsibility for the future of our children and our grandchildren; that we don't have to do anything more than just sit back and do exactly what we've been doing for the last 40 years. Well, that's unacceptable. It's an irresponsible position.

We are tackling this head-on. We have made huge advances. We have taken the biggest strides in North America by shutting down all the coal-fired plants. We're taking the next steps. I expect them to support—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier, and I will give the Premier a third opportunity: The details of the \$2-billion cap-and-trade scheme should not be hidden from the public. If this system is to be successful, there needs to be proper monitoring of emissions, credit allowances and trading procedures. The only information we have from this Premier is that they've already committed \$312 million of money that she hasn't even collected. Well, that's a good gesture. It's well short of the \$2 billion in revenue the government has predicted it will collect from this scheme.

When will the Premier tell us what she plans to do with the other \$1.7 billion from Ontario families and businesses? Why won't you just be transparent?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are developing the plan in a responsible way. Of course there will be allowances. Of course all of those structures will be in place. We've released our climate strategy. We've made it clear what the targets are. We've made it clear how we're going to be working with Quebec, California and Manitoba. We will be putting those design features out as we develop them.

But the fact is that people in this country, in this province and around the globe are already seeing the impacts of climate change. To be in a debate with a party that has no plan, that has no idea of how they would deal with climate change—and all they can do is present a critique that is hollow at its very, very best.

The fact is, we know that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We know that higher food costs, extreme weather events, droughts and floods—all of those are related to climate change, and all of those increase costs for families. We're going to tackle those as a responsible member of the global community.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The people of Ontario have clear priorities, like creating good jobs and protecting the health care that we rely on. People expect their Premier to share those priorities too.

But instead, the Liberals are making deep cuts to health care that we rely on—cuts that mean longer wait times for patients, fewer registered nurses in our hospitals, and less care when people need it the most.

Why does the Premier think patients should pay the price for the cuts to health care?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First, let me just say that I absolutely share the concerns of the people of Ontario in terms of the need to make sure that services like health care and education are strong. We rely on those every single day. I understand that.

Right now, we are having a real challenge as a country and, quite frankly, as a global economy, to make sure that we have good work for all of the people who live in our constituencies, for all of our residents, and to make sure that our economies grow.

The fact is that we have a plan in place that is tackling those things. That plan does not include cutting health care. That plan includes increasing our health care budget year after year, and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What increased funding does not mean, Mr. Speaker, is never changing anything. It doesn't mean that. There have to be changes. We're dealing with increasing mental health challenges. We're putting more money there and more money into community care. All of those challenges are things that we are tackling head-on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Liberals are cutting hospital budgets four years running, heading into the fifth. Mental health services are being cut in community after community. The education budget has been cut by \$250 million, and another \$250 million is on the way. Those are real cuts. I don't know what the Premier's talking about, but she's not in reality.

It is a priority for Ontarians to have a good health care system, and it is a priority for New Democrats as well, but it is not obviously a priority for this Premier. Ontarians are already waiting hundreds of days for home care.

Thousands of seniors are stuck on wait-lists for long-term care for years. And now, nearly 1,200 registered nurses have been cut from our hospitals in just over a year.

How can this Premier look Ontarians in the eye and say she's not cutting our health care system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The fact is that the health care budget has increased year over year. It will continue to increase. The member opposite will see in the budget that there is an increase to health care.

Let's just go through the hospitals and health care centres around the province that are hiring, Mr. Speaker, that have jobs posted as we speak: the Ottawa Hospital, Hamilton Health Sciences, Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital, Royal Ottawa Health Care Group, Cambridge Memorial Hospital, Bluewater Health in Sarnia, London Health Sciences Centre, Grand River Hospital and Health Sciences North in Sudbury. Mr. Speaker, there are institutions all over this province who are hiring. They are posting jobs.

The health care budget will increase, but we are making changes. We are changing the health care system to deliver health care where people need it and when they need it. That causes some disruption in the system, but it has to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier of this province should at least know what she's talking about when she talks about health care. The jobs she's talking about are casual jobs. They are unscheduled part-time jobs. Those are not real health care jobs. Nurses are not widgets in this province, Speaker.

The Liberals' freeze on hospital budgets is forcing hospitals to cut hundreds of nurses and front-line health care workers. That is the truth. You talk to any CEO in a hospital and they will tell you that that's what is happening. Next week's budget could bring even more cuts. That's what I expect to see in next week's budget.

Here's what that means to people: When a patient in Windsor or Waterloo or North Bay needs help, the nurse that they need to rely on will not be there for them. That patient will have to wait longer for care.

Why won't this Premier think about patients for a change and stop her cuts to health care?

1120

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Let me just make some comparisons, because the leader of the third party wants to talk about our record. Let's talk about their record, where the number of RNs in Ontario fell by 3,000 under the NDP government—

Interjections.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

They fired 3,000 RNs. We have hired more than 10,000 RNs, more than 25,000 nurses since 2003, full-time positions. The percentage of nurses working full-time under the NDP fell by 3%. The percentage of nurses

working full-time has increased under our government by 14%.

Our commitment is clear. They fired nurses. They introduced more part-time nurses. We've hired more full-time nurses to the tune of 25,000, including last year, where the complement of nurses working in our hospitals increased by more than 1,000.

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The patients in Ontario, I'm sure, are not impressed with that minister's response.

My next question is for the Premier. For most Ontarians, life is actually getting harder. I keep meeting families across this province who are struggling. They can't find a decent job, and more and more people are trying to survive on part-time and low-paying work, if they can find a job at all. But rather than working to make life better for families, the Liberals are too busy helping private investors turn a profit on the sell-off of Hydro One.

Why is this Premier more interested in helping her friends when she should be working for all Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's very interesting to me that, in one breath, the leader of the third party talks about the need for jobs, and the next thing out of her is about actually taking actions that would decrease jobs.

The fact is, the investments in infrastructure that we are making are creating 110,000 jobs a year. Those are jobs that are happening right now, never mind the jobs down the road because of the economic growth that that infrastructure will foster.

The fact is that I would expect the leader of the third party would actually be supportive of investments in infrastructure, that the leader of the third party would understand that putting people to work and providing those opportunities builds prosperity now and into the future. I would think the leader of the third party would be very supportive of the opportunities that are created by those investments, the investments that we're making in people's talent and skills, that she'd be supportive of that because that leads to economic growth now and into the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Regardless of the way the Premier decides to weave her tale, we all know that the way you build infrastructure is not by selling off Hydro One. In fact, that is the worst way to pay for infrastructure. So says the Financial Accountability Officer for this province.

The Premier should actually look at what is happening in Ontario today. Windsor has the highest unemployment rate in the entire country. Young people are struggling to find work and get a good start in their lives, and families are starting to feel like there are two different worlds here in the province of Ontario: There's a world where this Premier helps her friends get rich off the sale of our public hydro system, and there's another world where families are falling further and further behind.

People want to know: Why isn't this Premier working for them?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The world that I live in is a world where we have to make difficult decisions and we have to work on a whole number of fronts. I understand the challenges of people in Windsor, which is why we're doing everything in our power to make sure that the auto sector and the manufacturing sector have our support.

I was at a plant this morning where there's green technology that's being developed; solar panels are being developed and sold internationally. We're working to support a company like that that's going to expand. Those are the kinds of companies all across the province—whether it's in southwestern Ontario or in eastern Ontario or in northern Ontario—that we are looking to support.

The world I live in is the world where we have to make those decisions that are in the best interests of the people of this province. They're not always popular. It's difficult to make some of those decisions, Mr. Speaker, but that's actually the role of government: to make those decisions so we make the investments that are needed today and into the future. That's the work we're doing.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier needs to stop kidding herself. The sell-off of Hydro One is not a difficult decision; it is the wrong decision for the people of Ontario. That's what it is, Speaker. The people of Ontario have told her that.

In fact, the people of Ontario have clear priorities. They expect their government to protect their health care system and to help create good jobs, but the Liberals just are not working for Ontarians. Rather than helping people, we see a Premier who is focused on helping private investors profit off of the sale of Hydro One. We see Liberal insiders facing criminal charges for their conduct in the Premier's office, and next week, we will see even deeper cuts to our public services, Speaker. How can this Premier be so far out of touch with the people of Ontario and their priorities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's just look at the facts. Let's look at what is actually happening in Ontario, Mr. Speaker. Despite what the leader of the third party is saying, 2015 third-quarter results showed Ontario's real GDP has grown by 0.9%, which has outpaced both the Canadian and US economies. We've ranked first for foreign direct investment in North America for the second year in a row. Ontario was the only province in Canada to gain jobs in January. And since the recession, Ontario has created more than 600,000 jobs—608,300, to be exact. Almost 99% of those are full time. The unemployment rate of 6.7% is beating the national unemployment rate of 7.2%, and we've invested more than \$565 million in youth employment.

Mr. Speaker, we are working on every front to make sure that we create the conditions for economic growth and prosperity in this province.

WASTE DIVERSION

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is to the environment minister. Ontarians are rightly outraged with the waste and abuse of their money by the Liberals' tire tax agency, Ontario Tire Stewardship. When drivers pay an eco tax on each tire, they expect the money will go toward protecting our environment and increasing recycling. But the Toronto Star has revealed that OTS has been blowing that money on the Liberal government—Liberal golf tournaments, to be exact, lavish stays at luxury hotels, and fancy dinners of elk tenderloin and wild boar chops. There's only one way to stop this abuse of Ontarians' money, and that is to scrap the Liberals' tire tax agency.

Speaker, will the minister commit today to establish a clear legislated timeline to eliminate OTS?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I'm so glad the Toronto Star is doing its job, because the opposition isn't. I don't know where the party opposite has been while this government has been working hard. It presented a bill last year that eliminates the tire stewardship organization over the next year. We didn't even have a question from the opposition for an entire year on this, and then they had to read the newspaper to realize the government already solved the problem.

Mr. Speaker, maybe the member opposite, who's so frustrated by the issues of donations from that, could explain why the Conservative Party not once, not twice, but three times took money from the Ontario stewardship organization.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: That has nothing to do with the question at hand. The minister has admitted—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs will come to order.

Please put the question.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It is interesting that when you can't defend something, you try to deflect. So we'll go back to this question.

The minister has admitted that his eco tax programs and agencies are holding the province back from achieving a higher rate of waste diversion. Last November, the minister's office actually told the Toronto Star that to move forward with reform, Bill 151 would scrap eco tax agencies like OTS. Unfortunately, when reading Bill 151, it's clear there are no guarantees that this will actually

happen. This oversight proves, yet again, that this government just can't get anything right.

Will the minister commit to closing this loophole and establish a clear, legislated timeline to eliminate all eco tax programs?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: There are no eco tax programs. They are all being eliminated. We've already done that. It's clear that the opposition party doesn't read the climate strategy. It clearly—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's very clear that the opposition doesn't read the climate strategy. It doesn't read Bill 151, which very clearly outlines a schedule over the next five years for an orderly transition. Thank God they read the Toronto Star, because that seems to be the only journal of record.

They complain about donations from Ontario stewardship, but their bagmen are running over there to collect the money. It's a little bit of a moral conundrum they've gotten themselves into, Mr. Speaker. That's not deflection; that's painting yourself into a corner. But that sort of is the problem—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Premier: When the government set up a website to ask Ontarians for budget ideas, the second most popular idea was to stop the sale of Hydro One. People of Ontario know that the Hydro One fire sale will drive up their electricity costs while costing the public hundreds of millions of dollars a year in stable, long-term revenue. The Premier desperately wants to distract the people of Ontario from the sale of Hydro One, but beer and wine announcements don't seem to be doing the job anymore.

Is the government ignoring the people who spoke at budget hearings, disrespecting this Legislature and rushing ahead with early budgets just so it can change the channel on Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I know the member from Toronto-Danforth has been in this place for quite a long time, but he keeps promulgating myth after myth after myth. Speaker, he's the most myth-taken man in the Legislature—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's too close. I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

He should get his facts straight; okay? First of all, in terms of Hydro One, \$5 billion will go to paying down debt; \$4 billion will be invested in infrastructure. That will not come from taxes. It will not come from increasing our debt, and it will not come from cuts. It is responsible fiscal management. It's repurposing our assets in order that we can provide more services and

more economic development for the people in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ontarians know that the sale of Hydro One is not about them or their interests. They know it's about the interests of the Liberal Party and their Bay Street friends. The sale of Hydro One shows a government that can't think beyond the next election while it ignores the long-term interests of Ontario families.

Will the government finally put the interests of Ontario families ahead of the interests of the Liberal Party and stop the sale of Hydro One?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The premise of the question is that electricity rates are going to be going up in Ontario. They've been saying that across the province over and over again. They know that the Ontario Energy Board is the independent regulator that controls prices. They've done it before the broadening of ownership from Hydro One; they're doing it afterwards.

As a matter of fact, legislation that we've passed in this Legislature is strengthening the role of the Ontario Energy Board so that if any utility, including Hydro One, is not abiding by the rules, they're subject to a fine of \$1 million a day on the order of the Ontario Energy Board.

There's stronger regulation, the people of Ontario are better protected and Hydro One will not be able to raise its own rates.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. John Fraser: Ma question est pour le ministre des Finances. Minister, I know that recently you provided an update to the people of Ontario through the 2015 fall economic statement. In the update, you talked about our government's work and plans to continue creating jobs and growing our economy. Most recently, we heard that since 2009 Ontario has created over 608,300 jobs.

Minister, like many Ontarians, residents of Ottawa South would like to hear more about our government's plan. Could you please tell us when the next update on our progress will be?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I thank the member from Ottawa South for the question. Over the last few months, our government has collected over 2,700 ideas and pre-budget submissions. We've heard from Ontarians through in-person meetings, online with Budget Talks, in writing and via telephone town halls. In total, there were 20 in-person consultations in 13 cities where we heard from over 700 people.

What we heard consistently is that people want to get to and from work more quickly and spend more time with their families. They want to know that they have secure retirement, and they want a government that will invest in the people of this province while remaining fiscally responsible. That is what we will do in the 2016 budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: I thank the minister for that update. I had the opportunity as well to participate in a tele-town

hall with a number of my caucus colleagues from Ottawa where we spoke with thousands of residents in Ottawa. We, too, heard the same thing: that people want a government that they can count on to make their lives easier, one that focuses on the things that are important to them and their families.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can the minister please let us know what our government's plans are to do just that, and when?

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's a good question, Mr. Speaker. I again thank the member from Ottawa South for the question.

Next week, we will be providing an update to Ontarians on how we will continue to create jobs, grow the economy, invest in our young people, combat climate change and build key infrastructure.

As a government, we are focused on working together for the people of Ontario. With the upcoming budget, we will provide a positive plan to do just that.

I look forward to presenting Ontario's 2016 budget in this very House on February 25.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Connect for Mental Health, an inexpensive program proven to help psychiatric patients leave hospitals and successfully reintegrate into communities, has been dropped in London. The \$106,000 program saved London hospitals roughly \$2.9 million a year and provided an overlap of hospital and community care during discharge.

Unfortunately, due to this government's health care cuts, scandals and the freezing of the hospital budgets for the last four years, this program that saves health care dollars cannot be funded. Due to the financial mismanagement of the scandals of this government, health care services are being crowded out.

Mr. Speaker, how long will Ontarians suffer due to this government's incompetence?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. Certainly the provision of strong, high-quality mental health services in the London area is extremely important to this government. In fact, not very long ago, I was proud to announce, with the president of the Treasury Board, a new commitment of \$1.2 million in London toward a brand new mental health and addictions crisis centre in that city that will provide crisis intervention for adults aged 16 and up.

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This is such an important addition being run by the Canadian Mental Health Association Middlesex, as well as the Addiction Services of Thames Valley. They will work collaboratively, of course, with all of the health care providers within the community providing that crisis assessment, stabilization beds and longer-term community supports.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Minister of Health: Minister, that program that you could operate could fund two crisis centres with that money saved. Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that this program is now getting lost in their own government's bureaucracy. Results from this program were released last year and found improvement in the quality of life for mental health patients and a savings of \$2.9 million.

The South West LHIN has decided to work on developing a strategy for regional mental health, but that's expected to take up to 18 months to complete. The mental health and addictions advisory council that you mentioned has struck a working group to review this with no timeline. In the meantime, this program is going to be lost in London.

The minister knows that this program has already been studied. The evidence shows that it works, saves money and provides a better life for mental health patients. Will the minister show some compassion and save the program from the bureaucracy that this government has created?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know that the member opposite, because he has alluded to the review that the LHIN is undertaking now for those important community supports, supports that review. It's important that we continue to develop strong, coordinated collaborative programs.

I'm happy to announce that this morning I instructed my ministry to ensure that interim funding is made available to this organization while this important review is ongoing. It's good news for London. It's important that in this review period, as we develop a comprehensive approach to mental health services in the London area, this program is allowed to continue.

ONTARIO ANTI-RACISM DIRECTORATE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the government announced the creation of an Anti-Racism Directorate. It only took 10 years, but here it is now.

Community groups worked hard to make this happen, and our leader and our members have. We'll continue to champion an Ontario where no one is left behind and everyone can share in the opportunities that we create. But to make a change a reality, there must be a real commitment. There needs to be proper funding and staffing, and a clear mandate for this directorate. Premier, when will the government commit to attaching real numbers to the Anti-Racism Directorate in next week's budget?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I just want to start by saying what an honour it is to take on this new responsibility. You can talk to any member in our caucus and you'll know that, when it comes to racism, it's an issue that we all take very seriously.

Over the last four years as an MPP, I have met with groups like Colour of Poverty, CASSA and the African

Canadian Legal Clinic—many different groups—to talk about these issues. I know many members on this side of the Legislature have as well. We're looking for ways to build the right type of mandate that's reflective of what community members see as important, but also what the people of Ontario and people in our Legislature think is important.

We made the announcement yesterday. Give me a couple of weeks, at least, to come back. We'll come back with a plan, and I think people will be quite happy with it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Racism continues to be a persistent reality for many Ontarians. Thousands have joined the NDP's call to take action against racism and build a more inclusive Ontario. Yesterday's announcement was an important step forward in addressing systemic racism in the province. Now the government must take one step further and make a firm commitment to the directorate. Premier, what can Ontarians expect to see in next week's budget?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to thank the member opposite and the members in the Legislature for supporting this Anti-Racism Directorate. We know it's the right direction for Ontario.

I've been elected, as a trustee and as an MPP, for almost 13 years now. At the Toronto District School Board, we worked on issues. I know the Premier was at the school board and worked on equity. As the former Minister of Education, she brought forward the first equity policy for the Ministry of Education.

This is something that's embedded deep in the heart of our party. It's embedded deep in the heart of the Liberal mantra. It is something we want to continue to build upon.

I want to thank the NDP for supporting this proposal and this idea that we brought forward as a government. Thank you very much.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. In Friday's *Globe and Mail* newspaper, the public read that our government will be bringing forward a provincial strategy on human trafficking, and that's going to happen in June of this year.

As we've seen in media reports in recent months, human trafficking is a devastating issue that has long-lasting sociological and psychological impacts on survivors. It overwhelmingly targets young women and girls, and in particular those in indigenous communities. Our minister responsible for women's issues and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services are both showing very strong leadership on this issue.

Could the minister please update this House on the steps that she is taking to address this very serious issue of human trafficking in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for this very important question

and for her work on the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment.

She's absolutely right: Human trafficking is a very serious issue that we're working very hard on. I'm very pleased to be co-chairing our government's work on this with the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

In fact, this morning, I was privileged to attend one of our government's consultations on this issue. The chair of our permanent Roundtable on Violence Against Women helped us convene this meeting this morning with experts who provide supports to survivors of human trafficking. They're helping us to design a strategy. They'll be responsive to the needs of survivors.

This meeting this morning is just a first step in a broader process to develop our strategy and to ensure we hear from all the relevant voices. The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services is holding a meeting this afternoon with enforcement experts. Working together, we can ensure that the strategy is survivor-focused.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for her answer. As you heard, I chaired the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment. We heard many first-hand stories on human trafficking. You come to understand how important it is that our government does take action—strong action—to end human trafficking in Ontario.

It's very encouraging to hear that the strategy is going to focus on being responsive to the needs of survivors. The insight that they share, including the information that we heard at this morning's consultation, is going to play a very important part in forming our provincial strategy. However, it's also vital that Ontario's police services play a central role in coordinating our efforts to end human trafficking.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please tell this Legislature what steps are being taken to involve law enforcement in ending this terrible practice?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Our Premier and we all have made it very clear that human trafficking is absolutely deplorable, and our government will do whatever it takes to combat and eliminate this heinous act.

A key part of moving forward is further improving coordination of information and resources between local authorities, like our police services, government and community organizations.

That is why we have brought together experts from the front lines, including from the enforcement community, to advise us on how we can move forward. Their advice will help build on the important work already happening, from an enforcement perspective.

The Ontario Provincial Police already play a provincial coordination role for investigative and intelligence operations against human trafficking. Through Operation Northern Spotlight, which involved 29 police services

from across the country, 18 survivors were rescued, nine traffickers were arrested and 33 charges were laid.

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WIND TURBINES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Premier. More bad news on the energy file: Earlier this week it was revealed in the *Globe and Mail* that Windstream Energy is asking for damages of up to \$568 million because your government abruptly put a moratorium on offshore wind developments. We told the government it was wrong to approve turbines in the Great Lakes. They went ahead and signed agreements anyway. Then they abruptly reneged on those deals because it was politically convenient, and now taxpayers are on the hook. Sadly, we've seen this sort of behaviour before. When this government cancelled the gas plants for political convenience, it cost the taxpayers over \$1 billion.

Can the Premier explain why we're going down this road once again and why her government just can't get anything right?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Energy is going to want to comment on this, but I can't resist saying to the member opposite that their position was that we put a moratorium on all wind turbines, that we put a moratorium on all renewable power. You actually can't have it both ways. There are contracts in place. We made a decision based on environmental concerns—

Mr. Jim Wilson: Take the ones out of the Collingwood airport, if you like.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe-Grey.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We made a decision on environmental concerns. Offshore wind in fresh water is in the early stages of development. We thought that it was responsible to get more information about the impacts of the offshore wind. The Minister of the Environment is researching to ensure that a decision is made in the best interests of Ontarians.

As I say, you can't have it both ways. You can't say, "Do a moratorium on everything," and then complain that there was a moratorium put on this particular aspect.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Wow. Talk about wanting to have it both ways. First, you sign deals with companies to build turbines in the Great Lakes, and when it's politically bad for you, then you cancel them. That's why we're on the hook for this kind of money. It's clear that this government can't get anything right. When the truth finally comes out in the end, it always turns out to be wrong for the taxpayers in this province and they're the ones holding the bag.

Remember when cancelling the gas plants was going to cost \$40 million? Remember when smart meters were going to save people money? Windstream is not the only company suing your government. T. Boone Pickens's

case is still before NAFTA. Will ratepayers have to pay \$700 million in that settlement as well? Then there's the Trillium Power Wind Corp. lawsuit that is ongoing because this government once again deleted emails and destroyed evidence.

We know the cancelled gas plants cost over \$1 billion. Will the Premier admit that the taxpayers may be on the hook for another \$1 billion in another one of her energy fiascos?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As the member knows, this matter is effectively before the courts and we can't make a particular decision. Canada, representing Ontario, has presented a detailed counter-position, which is a public document, and the process will take its usual route.

The member opposite is assuming that the case has been lost. When the case has been determined, I'd be happy to answer the premise of his question.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Minister of Finance. All Ontarians deserve to retire with dignity. Unfortunately, this government doesn't seem to understand what constitutes "all Ontarians."

Since the day the ORPP was introduced, this government has looked for ways to exclude people. First, they have slowly but surely decreased the number of eligible people, and now they're just delaying the plan entirely. We want the strongest plan for the most people and this government wants the most watered-down plan for the fewest. Pension plans are made stronger with more people participating, but the government is scaling back this plan by the minute.

Will the minister please explain why every announcement they have made about the ORPP includes new exclusions, new delays and less retirement security for Ontarians?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite for this question. Indeed, it is very timely.

We are very committed to ensuring that when Ontarians retire, they can do so with dignity. In fact, it's our government's leadership that has moved forward to raise the issue of retirement security in this province. We have committed that by 2020, every working Ontarian will be part of a pension plan, either the ORPP or a comparable pension plan.

Just yesterday, in fact, we announced a commitment from the federal government to work with Ontario on the administration to ensure that we're working on efficiently implementing this plan in the best possible way. We are taking action on ensuring that Ontarians can retire with dignity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Less than a month ago, the finance minister said Ontarians “can’t wait any longer” for increased retirement security. But now he seems to think that people can wait an extra year while they focus on a dynamic business environment.

The Premier and her government have grown out of touch with the priorities of Ontarians. These aren’t small businesses or mom-and-pop shops that they’re delaying this for; they are the largest corporations in our province.

Why has the minister put the interests of big corporations ahead of the interests of the people of this province?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I just believe that the member opposite has it wrong. We are listening to businesses because it’s important that we implement this plan in a responsible way. We are ensuring that in 2017 we enrol members of the plan, and contributions will begin in 2018.

I’m a little surprised at the member opposite’s question. It was actually her party that said that we should wait and do nothing and wait for a federal government to respond to the issues of retirement security in this province.

We cannot afford to wait because we know that two thirds of Ontarians have no pension plan and they need to ensure that when they retire they can do so with dignity and with adequate income.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Last Friday, the President of the Treasury Board, along with the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, announced that our government has committed to another—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Who to, please?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My apologies—the minister of the treasury.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: —has committed to another new initiative as part of Ontario’s Green Investment Fund. Introduced in the fall economic statement, the fund is a \$325-million down payment on the province’s cap-and-trade program that will strengthen the economy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Building on previous investments through the fund, which include retrofits for homeowners and electric vehicle charging stations, this new project continues with the fund’s objective to direct money to efforts dedicated to fighting climate change, while also creating jobs in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the President of the Treasury Board explain what this new initiative is and how it addresses both climate change and job creation priorities?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Kingston and the Islands.

I was very happy last week, with the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, to make an announcement that I think every member of this House will be

very happy to hear about. We are continuing to put our climate change strategy into action, and last week we announced \$92 million from the Green Investment Fund into social housing retrofits that improve energy efficiency.

This is a triple win: It creates jobs for people installing energy-efficient boilers, windows, lighting and insulation; it also reduces the costs of heating and lighting and operating social housing; and, of course, it reduces our GHG emissions. This is part of our plan for securing a healthy, clean, prosperous, low-carbon future, while ensuring strong and sustainable communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: This question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I’m pleased to hear about our government’s continued commitment to invest in climate-change-fighting projects like the recently announced retrofit program for homeowners, another Green Investment Fund initiative.

This program also recognizes the important role buildings can play in reducing energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions. Retrofitting older buildings is an important way of ensuring Ontario has housing units ready to face the climate challenges of today and tomorrow. Both programs also create jobs, and yet targeting this investment in retrofits of social housing is a different focus.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister tell this House why our government is supporting energy efficiency in social housing buildings in particular?

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Thank you very much for the question. Many of the high-rise social housing towers that were built in the 1960s and 1970s had very different requirements under the building code. These buildings have now reached an age when major systems need replacing, and this, of course—the announcement—provides an excellent opportunity to provide energy efficiency. Retrofits create significant energy savings which will be felt by social housing providers and will reduce their energy bills. This will allow them to direct funds to other priorities such as further upgrades.

Individuals who live in single-unit housing quite often have to pay their own utility bills, and this is going to help those who most need assistance with social housing. I’m proud to be part of a government that recognizes that.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Associate Minister of Finance. Yesterday, the Minister of Finance announced that the Ontario pension plan would be delayed a year because the delay will allow us to “look at ways to meet the goals” of the Ontario pension within an enhanced Canada pension framework. Yet in November, you said, “Our Premier has been very, very clear that we are moving forward with the implementation of the ORPP” in January 2017.

Minister, why can you get the Prime Minister to join you in Whitby—Oshawa for a partisan campaign rally, but you can't get him to enhance the Canada pension so you can drop this plan and protect Ontario jobs?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I really want to thank the member opposite for this question. We are absolutely committed to our goal of implementing the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. The announcement that was made yesterday simply outlines the fact that we are working co-operatively with the federal government to ensure that we implement the best plan possible for the people of this province. At the same time, we remain committed to a national solution, should that emerge.

The member opposite should know that the Prime Minister alone cannot enhance CPP; he has to work with the provinces. In fact, he needs the co-operation of seven out of 10 provinces and two thirds of the population here in Canada.

We want to ensure that when people retire in this province, they have retirement security. That's why we're moving ahead with the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and taking that leadership forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Again to the associate minister: We all want Ontarians to have a secure and stable retirement. Yesterday, the Minister of Finance tried to assure us that the Ontario pension will be run at arm's length and can invest in whatever project is best. But then he changed his mind and said that pensions are "pools of capital," and gave two examples of the type of investments he would like to see. But, Mr. Speaker, pension plans should be for pensioners.

Minister, is this delay to the ORPP just another example of your government's failure to get things right?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Mr. Speaker, our announcement yesterday is a clear indication that we're listening. We're listening to the needs of Ontarians, including business, who have asked us for the additional time so that they can ensure that their systems are ready and that they can comply with the expectations of the ORPP.

The assertion that the member opposite is making with regard to the purpose of a pension plan: A plan is there for the benefit of the members. That's enshrined in our legislation. It is arm's length from the government of Ontario. The funds collected will be for the benefit of the members of the plan and will not form part of government's consolidated revenue. That is part of the legislation. We're ensuring that there is a professional arm's-length body that will administer this plan and ensure that the benefits will be for the members of the plan. That's what we're doing. So we are taking leadership on this side of the House to ensure that when people retire, they can do so with dignity.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance on a point of order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I beg your indulgence. I'd like to introduce the newest member to the Ministry of Finance, the new director of communications for the Ministry of Finance, Monsieur Fabrice de Dongo. Welcome to the Legislature and welcome to your new job.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to correct my record. Earlier, I said that the number of nurses working full-time under the NDP fell by 3%, or approximately 4,000 fewer full-time nurses, while the number of nurses working full-time under the Liberal government rose by 14%. Mr. Speaker, I was wrong. Under our government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This is unbelievable. For somebody to stand on a point of order and be heckled—please, that's not acceptable.

Please finish your correction.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I had said that, under our government, the number of nurses working full-time rose by 14%. I was wrong. In fact, under our government the number of nurses working full-time increased not by 14% but by nearly 30%.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment and Climate Change on a point of order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I would just like to welcome the people from the ports authorities here today. They do great work in many of our communities. They have a reception later. I hope we'll all join them later this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from York—Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Mr. Speaker, I ask for your indulgence. I was unable to announce the page for York—Simcoe earlier today. I would like us to recognize Jessie Popowich.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1206 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I believe the members from the Association of Canadian Port Authorities are on their way in, so I just wanted to introduce them. They were here this morning. From Oshawa port, we have Donna Taylor and Aleks Bolotenko. From Hamilton port, we have Bruce Wood and Ian Hamilton. From Thunder Bay, we've got Tim Heney and Chris Heikkinen. From Windsor, we have Peter Berry, and from Toronto, Angus Armstrong. We also have Wendy Zatylny from the Association of Canadian Port Authorities. They'll be

hosting a reception this evening, starting at 5 o'clock. All are welcome and I hope to see you there. Welcome to our guests when they come in.

Mr. Han Dong: I believe members of the Council of Ontario Universities are with us this afternoon as well. I just want to welcome them to the Ontario Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you and welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: At the pre-budget consultations in recent weeks, one thing became painfully clear. This government's policies and decisions are hurting Ontarians. A deliberate choice has been made to cut health care and lay off nurses by the hundreds. As a result, all three parties heard stories about patients collapsing on their front steps after being discharged from care too early. At the hearings, it's worth noting that 30 times violence was referred to, mostly in connection to health care and corrections workers.

At North Bay Regional Health Centre, this government has cut 350 front-line health care workers, including 100 nurses. One nurse was recently fired after the violence issue was addressed publicly. I spoke at a rally in front of my office last week and pledged to bring this issue to Queen's Park. I ask the government today to expedite the review of her grievance.

The Premier, meanwhile, needs to realize that many of these professionals subject to workplace violence are women—yet the cuts continue. This is happening today in Kathleen Wynne's Ontario because the government can't manage our finances and spends on self-interest. These health care cuts must stop.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: When Constable Garda took his own life and made front page news in the Star, this was hardly an isolated incident. Since January 1, 10 first responders with PTSD have committed suicide. This is under the direct watch of this government, which has had a bill before it for seven years, Mr. Speaker—seven years, four tablings and one second reading in 2014. All this government had to do was take that bill to committee. If they had wanted to amend it, they could have. Quite frankly, if this government does not see post-traumatic stress disorder for first responders as a workplace injury, how then can they be expected to be taken seriously by employers, by the public, by anyone else?

The first aspect of prevention is to recognize the disease as such. This is a disorder. It takes the lives of tens—almost a hundred, actually, in the last three years, and it affects thousands. It can be prevented, but sometimes it won't be prevented. We know this from our

military, and now we know it from those who run into trauma when we run out.

Mr. Speaker, I ask—in fact, I plead and implore, on behalf of tens of thousands of first responders in this province, that this government act directly to make post-traumatic stress disorder a workplace injury. It was promised in November. Now it's being promised in February. We say, do it now.

FAMILY DAY WALKATHON

Mr. Bob Delaney: On Family Day, our Mississauga Muslim community held its fifth Family Day Walkathon. Past walkathons have supported our Trillium Health Partners Foundation. This year, proceeds from the donations made to the Islamic Circle of North America, or ICNA, were dedicated to helping settle a group of Syrian families.

Some years ago, a group of leaders from ICNA set out to contribute to the broader Mississauga community. I introduced them to the leaders of our hospital's foundation. Our Muslim community set itself a goal of raising a quarter of a million dollars to assist the hospital within five years. They exceeded that fundraising goal ahead of schedule, not uncommon in Mississauga.

It is not hard to put together a group to walk for charity in the good weather. Our Muslim community picked the winter's coldest weekend for an outdoor event and still attracted hundreds of people.

Thanks to organizer Arif Jahangiri, all the many volunteers and all our neighbours for their work and their donations.

Mississauga is doing for new Canadians of Syrian origin what former generations of Canadians did for newcomers of Scottish, Irish, Chinese, Sikh, German, Italian, Greek, Hungarian and Vietnamese origins, and so many others as well. It's not just the right thing to do. It's the Canadian thing to do.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Bill Walker: Today I rise to recognize February as Black History Month. Black History Month is a special occasion for all of us to show our appreciation for the many achievements of people of African heritage in Ontario. As you know, my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound commemorates black history with Emancipation Day, which we celebrate every August 1 in Owen Sound, and have done so since 1862, making it the longest-running event on this continent.

Owen Sound was the northernmost refuge for the slaves fleeing from the southern states. The village of Sydenham was the last terminal of the railroad and many escaped slaves settled here, finding work and raising families.

Emancipation festival organizer Blaine Courtney and the festival's heritage interpretation coordinator and Grey Roots manager, Petal Furness, are busy working on the 2016 festival in an effort to continue to commemorate the abolition of slavery and to celebrate those individuals and

groups who made the Underground Railroad journey possible.

Yesterday I had the pleasure of joining my colleague and Wellington–Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott to watch the proclamation of the Black History Month Act at Queen's Park. As you know, the Wellington–Halton Hills member was instrumental in helping to pass a bill to recognize January 21 as Lincoln Alexander Day in Ontario, in honour of Alexander, who was first elected to the House of Commons as a Progressive Conservative in 1968, becoming Canada's first black member of Parliament in Ottawa, and Canada's first black federal cabinet minister in 1979.

Just earlier this month, our party leader and my caucus colleagues hosted a very successful reception here at Queen's Park to kick off our Black History Month recognition.

I'd encourage all members and their families to visit Owen Sound on Emancipation Day, to visit our black history cairn built 10 years ago, after councillor Peter Lemon and Bonita Johnson-de Matteis, a local artist, author and descendant of an escaped slave, partnered up with several organizations to help commemorate early black settlers—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Ontarians were excited to hear about this government's prioritization of transportation infrastructure. Northerners in particular listened with keen interest, as small northern communities grapple with hundreds of millions of dollars of road, bridge and other infrastructure renewal; gridlock, which in the north means closed or impassable highways without alternate routes; and the lack of public transportation both within and between our communities.

Simply put, getting around in the north is time consuming, difficult and expensive, which is why northerners were looking forward to the badly needed transportation infrastructure promised by this government. But it seems that the north has been left out of the Premier's plans.

Instead, we've seen a set of double standards, delayed funds, inaction and mismanagement when it comes to the very basic infrastructure in the north. The reality in the north is that this government promised to fund programs such as Connecting Link and the Small Communities Fund but has failed to deliver.

Intercommunity transportation is government-funded and tax-exempt in the south but, in the case of the Northlander, is taxed and expected to be self-sustaining in the northeast, and non-existent in the northwest.

Travelling our roads in winter is a crapshoot because of shoddy highway maintenance, and the government knows this because Ontarians, MPPs and the Auditor General have been saying so for years, and yet this government has still not addressed the problem.

In this government's last budget, we saw a plan to defer investment in transportation infrastructure in the

north. Will we see a firm commitment to the north this year?

1510

COUNCIL OF ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES

Mr. Han Dong: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge an important organization in Trinity–Spadina and in Ontario: the Council of Ontario Universities and their team of university researchers. The research teams here today are part of a larger initiative entitled Research Matters, which is finding new ways to better the lives of every Ontarian.

University researchers work behind the scenes, steadily progressing towards ambitious new ideas that improve public policy and private practice; advance technology; foster a healthier, happier, more prosperous society; and build communities. I'm privileged to have so many great students and researchers in my riding of Trinity–Spadina. Their work at U of T, OCAD University and Ryerson University has no doubt made a positive impact on the lives of Ontarians.

I would also like to acknowledge the past president of the council, Ms. Bonnie Patterson. Thank you to Bonnie for your dedication to Ontario's post-secondary system.

And thank you to the research teams for joining us today. I invite all members of this House to join them this evening at their reception in room 228 to learn more about their important work.

ADVANCED AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: This Saturday, February 20, the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program will be hosting its annual Dream Auction in Guelph, in support of its 16th class.

Established in 1984, the AALP is an executive development program for men and women who are interested in broadening their horizons and expanding their networks to help shape the future of rural communities across this province and the agri-food sectors of Ontario. At its core, the program seeks to expand leadership skills, increase participants' knowledge of the agri-food system and rural Ontario, and enhance perspectives on critical issues in the industry by immersing them in study topics such as marketing and economics, environmental impacts and globalization, as well as the dynamics of change.

This year's participants represent a broad spectrum of agri-food organizations and rural community groups, from Bayer CropScience to Grain Farmers of Ontario to 4-H Ontario.

In particular, I would like to extend special recognition to two participants in this year's class, from the riding of Huron–Bruce: Rebecca Miller of Auburn and Emily Morrison of Lucknow.

Proceeds from events such as the Dream Auction coming up this Saturday are vital in supporting the participants, and they're used to assist with things such as

tuition fees and opportunities to participate in study tours across North America and internationally as well.

As a part participant myself—in class 6, to be exact—I would like to encourage people to track the learning opportunities associated with this program. It's second to none.

BLOOD DONATION

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Over half of all Canadians say that they or a family member have needed blood or blood products, yet less than 4% of eligible Canadians donate blood.

Blood and blood products are a critical part of every-day medical care, including major surgeries, medical procedures, cancer treatments and managing disease. One donation can save three lives. There is no substitute for blood, and we desperately need more people to donate.

This Valentine's Day, with the support of my amazing community, my staff and the Kingston branch of Canadian Blood Services, I held a What's Your Type? event to help individuals find out their blood type, ask any questions that they might have about donating blood, and sign up donors for our blood drive this week. We were so fortunate to have past donors and recipients join us to share their stories about the difference blood donation made in their lives. Usually, it was the difference between life and death.

I would also like to acknowledge Barbara Bell, who has a rare blood type and hadn't donated in a while but meant to, and Joanne Curran, who came on behalf of her daughter Mackenzie Curran, who has received 27 blood transfusions to treat her leukemia.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage everyone here to consider becoming a blood donor, and to help spread awareness about the importance of blood donation in their communities. You never know; you or a loved one may need it one day. The gift of life is in you to give.

Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

SERVICES HOSPITALIERS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Aujourd'hui, j'ai le plaisir de vous informer des grandes rénovations de l'Hôpital général d'Etoibicoke. Avec cette addition de quatre étages, nous allons élargir, par quatre fois, la taille actuelle de l'hôpital. Spécifiquement, les ajouts comprennent notamment ces sept éléments suivants : salle d'urgence ultramoderne, soins intensifs, soins graves ou critiques, département de maternité pour les nouveau-nés, département de chirurgie ambulatoire, département cardiorespiratoire et département neuro-diagnostique.

Speaker, I'm pleased to say that this four-storey addition will actually quadruple the footprint—not necessarily the carbon footprint—of the Etobicoke General Hospital with a number of new services that I've just outlined: cardiorespiratory diagnostic unit, neuro-diagnostic services.

For example, for my constituents in Etobicoke North, should they require evaluation for angina—chest pains that may be of cardiac origin—they will be able to perform these tests on-site at state-of-the-art facilities. Similarly, many folks require assessments for memory loss, for potential dementia, Alzheimer's and so on, and this new addition will also house absolutely state-of-the-art neurodiagnostic services.

Health care is on the move in Etobicoke North, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

I will now entertain the President of the Treasury Board on a point of order.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Mr. Speaker, I have a message from the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by her own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2016, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly. Toronto, February 11, 2016. Elizabeth Dowdeswell.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ILLEGAL TRADE AND TRAFFICKING OF PEOPLE, DRUGS, MONEY, TOBACCO AND WEAPONS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 CONCERNANT LA COMMISSION D'ENQUÊTE SUR LE COMMERCE ET LE TRAFIC ILLICITES DE PERSONNES, DE DROGUES, D'ARGENT, DE TABAC ET D'ARMES

Mr. Barrett moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 162, An Act to establish a commission of inquiry into illegal trade and trafficking of people, drugs, money, tobacco and weapons / Projet de loi 162, Loi visant la création d'une commission d'enquête sur le commerce et le trafic illicites de personnes, de drogues, d'argent, de tabac et d'armes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Toby Barrett: The bill requires the Premier to recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that a commission be appointed to inquire into and report on illegal trade, and trafficking of people, drugs, money, tobacco and weapons, and to make recommendations, including recommendations for legislative measures, directed to the avoidance of those phenomena.

I'll mention that on December 1, I put together a package explaining this legislation, and I distributed it to all MPPs of all parties about two and a half months ago. I thought I would just get out in front of it before introducing the legislation.

With respect to the explanatory note: Except for the deadline for submitting reports, the Public Inquiries Act, 2009, applies to the commission and inquiry. The commission must begin its inquiry within 60 days after being appointed and must make an interim report in six months and a final report in 12 months.

MOTIONS

CONSIDERATION OF BILLS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice with respect to private members' public bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Government House leader.

1520

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that the order of the House dated June 4, 2015, referring Bill 111, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 to eliminate fixed rate electricity contracts between retailers and consumers, to the Standing Committee on General Government, be discharged; and

That the order of the House dated March 26, 2015, referring Bill 76, An Act to encourage the purchase of vehicles that use natural gas as a fuel, to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, be discharged; and

That Bills 76 and 111 be instead referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly; and

That the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to meet on Wednesday, February 24, 2016, and Wednesday, March 2, 2016, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., in Toronto, for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 42, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 to provide that the head of council of the regional municipality of York must be elected; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 42:

—Notice of public hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly's website and Canada NewsWire; and

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 5 p.m. on Friday, February 19, 2016; and

—That witnesses be scheduled to appear before the committee on a first-come, first-served basis; and

—That each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation, followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members; and

—That the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Wednesday, March 2, 2016; and

That the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to meet on Wednesday, March 9, 2016, and Wednesday, March 23, 2016, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., in Toronto, for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 76; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 76:

—Notice of public hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly's website and Canada NewsWire; and

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 2 p.m. on Friday, March 4, 2016; and

—That witnesses be scheduled to appear before the committee on a first-come, first-served basis; and

—That each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation, followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members; and

—That the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Wednesday, March 23, 2016; and

That the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to meet on Wednesday, April 6, 2016, and Wednesday, April 13, 2016, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., in Toronto, for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 111; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 111:

—Notice of public hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly's website and Canada NewsWire; and

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 2 p.m. on Friday, April 1, 2016; and

—That witnesses be scheduled to appear before the committee on a first-come, first-served basis; and

—That each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation, followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members; and

—That the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Wednesday, April 13, 2016.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader moves that the order of the House dated June 4—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispensed.

Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many residents and businesses in Ontario rely on the ability to drive a vehicle in order to work, buy food and otherwise function;

"Whereas licence suspension upon a receipt of a medical notice to that effect is immediate; and

"Whereas constituents are forced to wait 30 business days following a positive medical review by their physician prior to being reinstated; and

"Whereas this wait time is not prescribed in any legislation or regulation, but is solely due to Ministry of Transportation policies that ignore the reality of living and operating a business, especially in rural and northern Ontario; and

"Whereas a needlessly long licence suspension threatens the livelihoods of many families in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To direct the Ministry of Transportation to institute a five-business-day service guarantee for drivers' licence reinstatements following the submission of a positive physician's review."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Ryan.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

M^{me} France G  linas: I have this petition from Rose Riopel from Val Caron, in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice....

"Whereas once you privatize Hydro One, there's no return; and

"Whereas we'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"Whereas we'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"Whereas we'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Luke to bring it to the front.

LUNG DISEASE

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in

direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite ... and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I agree with this petition, affix my name and hand it to page Julia.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John Yakabuski: I've got a stack of petitions here from people worried about health care in the province of Ontario.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I support this petition, attach my name and send it down with Dhruv.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is entitled "Ontarians Need Access to Medical Specialists."

"To the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care:

"Whereas the Ontario government collects incomplete and misleading data on wait times, accounting only for the time it takes between treatment recommendation and medical procedure, but fails to account for the wait time that occurs prior to the initial specialist intake appointment; and

"Whereas there is currently no mechanism in place to accurately measure and track the time between referral to a specialist and the initial specialist appointment; and

“Whereas Ontario is behind international standards for specialist wait times, particularly in the specialties of neurosurgery, gastroenterology and rheumatology; and

“Whereas many Ontarians are forced to wait several months, or even years, before getting treatment from a specialist in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to create a mechanism to accurately and effectively track complete wait times to see specialists in Ontario, with the goal of ultimately reducing wait times for patients and families.”

It's my pleasure to affix my signature and give this to page Bianca.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I'm going to take a moment to reflect on what I heard, and I'm going to give advice. In reading petitions, you cannot read things in petitions that you would not normally be able to say in the House—I'm going to offer that as advice—which means that if something is said in a petition that you know is unparliamentary language, you must bypass that language. You don't have to read the petition as it is. So I'm going to give counsel that it can no longer be done, and I'll stop it from happening.

1530

HOME INSPECTION INDUSTRY

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the home inspector industry remains largely unregulated; and

“Whereas homeowners are increasingly reliant on home inspectors to make an educated home purchase; and

“Whereas the unregulated industry poses a risk to consumers;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To protect consumers by regulating the home inspection industry and licensing home inspectors.”

I agree with this petition. I'll affix my name and send it to the table with page Ryan.

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Toby Barrett: I also wish to read in a petition with respect to the delay in reinstating driver's licences.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many residents and businesses in Ontario rely on the ability to drive a vehicle in order to work, buy food and otherwise function;

“Whereas licence suspension upon receipt of a medical notice to that effect is immediate; and

“Whereas constituents are forced to wait 30 business days following a positive medical review by their physician prior to being reinstated; and

“Whereas this wait time is not prescribed in any legislation or regulation, but is solely due to Ministry of Transportation policies that ignore the reality of living

and operating a business, especially in rural and northern Ontario; and

“Whereas a needlessly long licence suspension threatens the livelihoods of many families in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To direct the Ministry of Transportation to institute a five-business-day service guarantee for drivers' licence reinstatements following the submission of a positive physician's review.”

I agree with the sentiments in this petition and affix my signature.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas emergency response workers (firefighters, police officers and paramedics) confront traumatic events on a near daily basis to provide safety to the public;

“Whereas many emergency response workers suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of their work;

“Whereas emergency response workers go through painstaking steps in order to receive WSIB benefits based on post-traumatic stress acquired while serving the public;

“Whereas Bill 2 ‘An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder’ sets out that if an emergency response worker suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder it is presumed that they acquired the illness on the job, unless the contrary is shown;

“Whereas this change would ease the process for receiving benefits for emergency response workers with post-traumatic stress disorder arising out of work;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to unanimously endorse and quickly pass Bill 2 ‘An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder’.”

I add my name to the thousands, and I'm going to give it to Delaney to be delivered to the table.

PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

M. Shafiq Qaadri: J'ai une pétition sur l'élimination des microbilles des produits cosmétiques.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que les microbilles sont de petites particules de plastique de moins de 1 mm de diamètre, qui passent à travers nos systèmes de filtration de l'eau et sont présentes dans nos rivières et dans les Grands Lacs;

« Attendu que la présence de ces microbilles dans les Grands Lacs augmente et qu'elles contribuent à la pollution par le plastique de nos lacs et rivières d'eau douce;

« Attendu que la recherche scientifique et les données recueillies jusqu'à présent révèlent que les microbilles

qui sont présentes dans notre système d'alimentation en eau stockent des toxines, que des organismes confondent ces microbilles avec des aliments et que ces microbilles peuvent se retrouver dans notre chaîne alimentaire;

« Nous, les soussignés, présentons une pétition à l'Assemblée législative aux fins suivantes :

« Mandater le gouvernement de l'Ontario pour qu'il interdise la création et l'ajout de microbilles aux produits cosmétiques et à tous les autres produits de santé et de beauté connexes et demander au ministère de l'Environnement d'effectuer une étude annuelle des Grands Lacs pour analyser les eaux et déceler la présence de microbilles. »

Je vous l'envoie avec page Julia.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

"Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

"Whereas the recent announcement to implement the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

I agree with this petition, sign it and hand it to page Luke.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas government cuts have a direct impact on patient care and front-line workers;

"Whereas hospital base operating budgets have been frozen for four years in a row and hospital global funding increases have been set below the rate of inflation since

2008, meaning that hospital budgets have been cut in real dollar terms ... for eight years in a row;

"Whereas Ontario government funding figures show that home care funding per client is less today than it was in 2002;

"Whereas Ontario hospital funding is the lowest in Canada;

"Whereas Ontario ranks eighth out of 10 provinces in hospital funding as a percentage of provincial GDP; and

"Whereas the government has actually refused to acknowledge that service cuts are happening;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately stop cuts and freezes to hospital budgets;

"To immediately cease the laying off of nurses and other front-line workers; and

"To fund hospitals adequately to ensure highest quality patient care across the province."

I support this petition, will affix my signature and give it to page Luke.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I have a petition to bring to the floor today on supporting Moving Ontario Forward in Ottawa, LRT phase II.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are critical transportation infrastructure needs for the province;

"Whereas giving people multiple avenues for their transportation needs takes cars off the road;

"Whereas public transit increases the quality of life for Ontarians and helps the environment;

"Whereas the constituents of Orléans and east Ottawa are in need of greater transportation infrastructure;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the Moving Ontario Forward plan and the Ottawa LRT phase II construction, which will help address the critical transportation infrastructure needs of Orléans, east Ottawa and the province of Ontario."

It gives me great pleasure to sign this petition and give it to page Andrew.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Todd Smith: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that was collected over the winter break.

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to

come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

“Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and
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“Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don’t have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

“Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario’s Hydro One.”

I agree with this petition and sign it, and give it to page Andrew to deliver.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That’s the end of petitions.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members’ public business, such that Mr. Dickson assumes ballot item number 27 and Mr. Thibeault assumes ballot item number 39.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTH INFORMATION PROTECTION ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA PROTECTION DES RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LA SANTÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 16, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 119, An Act to amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, to make certain related amendments and to repeal and replace the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, 2004 / Projet de loi 119,

Loi visant à modifier la Loi de 2004 sur la protection des renseignements personnels sur la santé, à apporter certaines modifications connexes et à abroger et à remplacer la Loi de 2004 sur la protection des renseignements sur la qualité des soins.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): When this was last debated, it was with the third party. I don’t see the member, so we’ll move on to the government side. The member from Ottawa–Orléans.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to inform everyone that I will be sharing my time with the member for Cambridge, the member for Burlington and our Attorney General.

Il me fait un plaisir aujourd’hui de me lever et de parler au nom de mes commettants d’Ottawa–Orléans sur ce projet de loi 119. I’m pleased to rise in the House today, on behalf of my constituents in Ottawa–Orléans, in support of Bill 119, the Health Information Protection Act.

Ontario has historically been on the forefront of health privacy, and this bill helps to reinforce the high quality of support and privacy our system offers. The members of Ontario’s workforce who interact with health information have an important role to play in upholding this privacy. These health care custodians are an integral part of how patients interact with the health sector in many ways.

As a former social worker in a hospital setting, I understand extremely well the role that health care workers play in consistently respecting and upholding rights to privacy.

With this legislation, we will reinforce the responsibility of health care custodians in maintaining patients’ rights. In changing the Personal Health Information Protection Act, custodians will now be required to report privacy breaches to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, rather than just having an option to. This is coupled with a stronger process to prosecute offences under PHIPA, along with stronger deterrents against unauthorized collection, use or disclosure of personal health information, by significantly increasing fines for misuse.

These changes will allow the public to have greater confidence in the security of their information in a time where electronic privacy is a pressing issue—across all sectors, I would say, Mr. Speaker, not only our health care system.

Bill 119 will also create a strong foundation to secure sharing of patients’ personal health information through electronic health records. This government is reviving work undertaken by the last Legislature to protect Ontarians’ electronic health information and develop stronger, more comprehensive frameworks through EPHIPA.

The efforts taken here have been done not only by the government, but also with the support of the province’s independent Information and Privacy Commissioner, who is mandated to uphold and protect open government and personal privacy. With this kind of expertise and advice behind this legislation, Ontarians can be sure that they are getting a transparent and accountable government with respect to health records.

Bill 119 will seek to modernize the provincial framework for personal electronic records, but it will also work to clarify the purpose of related laws. It is important that Ontarians understand their rights when it comes to their medical records and the information and support they receive. In addition, it is crucial that existing standards do not interfere with the health facility's duties to disclose information to patients, especially in the case of a critical incident investigation.

Through changes to the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, this bill will clarify and reaffirm the rights of patients to access information about their care. It will clarify the rules for disclosure in cases of accidents or errors on the part of health care professionals and allow our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care the appropriate mechanisms to ensure this is done consistently.

Of all the information that is collected about us, our health information is perhaps the most sensitive aspect of our life. It is exceptional because it is distinctly unique to each of us as individuals. This government believes in upholding the rights we are granted as Ontarians to the security of our personal information, especially when it concerns something as crucial and fundamental as our own health.

People in Ontario deserve to know that they are protected by the health care system, and that it is accountable, transparent and keeps their personal health information private. This bill will allow health care practitioners and patients to have their voices heard when it comes to protecting confidentiality and creates a framework for it to be continuously revised and strengthened, which is why I stand here in full support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 119, the Health Information Protection Act, 2015. I really do thank our Minister of Health for introducing this bill that would strengthen accountability, transparency and security in Ontario's health care system.

Speaker, I have personal knowledge of this. I've worked as a nurse for decades in the health care system. I understand the importance that patients place not only on accessing their personal health information, but also having that information protected from prying eyes. I've been witness in the past to several incidents where other staff or family members have been known to take charts out of patients' rooms and read them, and certainly it's been more protected from those kinds of things being electronic records, but it certainly does cause the patient and family a lot of discomfort.

Through well-constructed amendments to the Personal Health Information Protection Act, the Quality of Care Information Protection Act and the Public Hospitals Act, Bill 119 would help improve patient care and confidence in the health care system.

The first section of Bill 119 contains key amendments to strengthen the Personal Health Information Protection Act, as well as introducing rules and governance for the shared electronic health record, something that I used

each and every day in my own career as a nurse in recent years. In order to increase accountability and transparency in patient records, custodians would be required to report all incidents where a privacy breach occurred to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, as well as to the relevant regulatory college when such a breach occurs in human resources or in looking at health care records.

Speaker, there were several incidents on the ward I used to be on where these kinds of breaches were found, usually by staff members, often late at night. I'd have to say that I was really proud of being part of a profession where registered nurses would take that breach very seriously and then report it to the authorities, whether it was human resources, whether it was to the privacy officer; if it was at night, we would contact a manager to be able to do this. In that way, we were able to make sure that the patients and the families were protected.

Bill 119 would also strengthen the prosecution process for violations of the Personal Health Information Protection Act. The current requirement that prosecutions must begin within six months of the alleged breach will be removed. In addition, the bill would further discourage snooping into patient records by doubling the maximum fines for offences under the act, from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for individuals, and from \$250,000 to \$500,000 for the organization.

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Speaker, I believe that these two amendments demonstrate that our government places the need to protect patients' privacy at the highest priority, and as a nurse, I concur.

The second section of Bill 119 addresses the need for greater transparency in critical incident reviews. The bill affirms the right of patients to access information about their health care and makes it clear that the Quality of Care Information Protection Act does not interfere with a health facility's duty to disclose information to patients or interview them as part of a critical incident investigation.

As well, the amendments contained within the bill would provide a regulation-making authority for the minister, if needed, to mandate a uniform approach as to when and how the Quality of Care Information Protection Act can be used, and that the minister review the act every five years. Certainly, in today's fast-paced environment, where a lot of electronic records are being updated all the time, this is very necessary.

Bill 119 would also amend the Public Hospitals Act by mandating the inclusion of patients or their representatives in interviews surrounding critical incident investigations, along with requirements that hospitals disclose the cause of such incidents to patients and share incident data with other hospitals for mutual learning purposes.

Speaker, I want to commend the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for bringing this bill forward, which will strengthen both the protection of patients' medical information and the transparency of Ontario's health care

system in patient care. Again, as a former nurse who has worked with patient records for decades and seen how they went from paper records to electronic records, I really feel this is very important, moving forward in patient care safety.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: It's my pleasure to stand in the House and speak to Bill 119, the Health Information Protection Act and, in so doing, join my colleague from Cambridge and the member from Ottawa—Orléans.

Speaker, as was said by my colleague a few moments ago, our government is committed to ensuring that the personal information of Ontarians is protected at all times, while minimizing the potential risks that could compromise this information. That is why we introduced Bill 119: to protect the personal health information of those who trust us with their care at the most difficult times, often, in their lives.

When the Personal Health Information Protection Act, known as PHIPA, was introduced and passed, it was integral in protecting the very private health information of Ontarians. The amendments to PHIPA introduced by Minister Hoskins today are an important evolution of the world in which we live and a cornerstone of our government and public service.

Like many Ontarians, I value the mobility of our province's health care. I often travel around the province, as members do. My mother lives in Windsor, for example; I go to visit her. On any given day, I could access treatment at my hospital, Joseph Brant, in my community, and—who knows—receive an impromptu service later that day while in Windsor, visiting mum at Windsor Regional Hospital. PHIPA heightens the mobility and access to care that Ontarians enjoy in instances such as these. It will also ensure that a patient who may be visiting a hospital for the first time is not given medication they are allergic to, and that their emergency contact is notified while in their care.

However, with great power comes great responsibility. As technology evolves, our laws and regulations must evolve as well. They must evolve for the betterment of our province and for the people we serve. This is why our government has introduced Bill 119, which reintroduces and updates the electronic health record privacy framework initially introduced in the Electronic Personal Health Information Protection Act, and provides key and necessary amendments to that act.

I know that most health information custodians, including those like my colleague here next to me, the member from Cambridge, a nurse, doctors and other professionals across our province take great pride in minimizing the risk of breaching an individual's privacy. They do so with great care and great attention. They know how important it is to maintain the privacy of a patient's personal information, and they've taken great strides to do so. The unfortunate reality, however, is that privacy breaches do occur on occasion and anything that we, as legislators, can do to prevent or minimize the risk is our responsibility; it's also the right thing to do.

By making it mandatory to report privacy breaches, as defined through regulation, to the Information and Privacy Commissioner and to relevant regulatory colleges, we are committing to two key pillars: (1) our government's strong and open relationship with the independent officers who watch diligently over this Legislature by ensuring that the information they need to perform their duties efficiently and accurately is given to them in a timely manner; (2) and wanting to ensure that those receiving accreditation through regulatory colleges are accountable to those colleges in the ways that colleges expect them to be.

You see, Mr. Speaker, regulatory health colleges do not simply teach health care professionals the technical skills they need, such as taking blood pressure, inserting an IV or performing open-heart surgery. Regulatory health colleges teach the ethical pillars that are the cornerstone in performing as a regulated health professional, privacy being of utmost importance. Privacy, as an ethical professional standard, is not just what Ontarians expect, it is what they deserve.

The creation of stronger deterrents utilized to prevent the unauthorized collection, use or disclosure of personal health information by doubling the maximum fine for offences under PHIPA is key in ensuring that those who wish to abuse people's personal information think twice before committing these heinous acts. Ultimately, Bill 119 is about making sure that the private health information of every person in Ontario is safe and secure. By making the system more transparent and accountable, Ontarians can rest assured that their records are kept confidential and can never be used inappropriately.

Here in Ontario, we have one of the best, if not the best, health care systems in the world, and it is important, then, that the public be able to put their trust in it at all times. With this bill, we can reinforce the great trust that already exists between our health care providers and our patients.

I ask all members of this House to support this very important piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure, as a nurse, to speak on this very important piece of legislation, Bill 119, the Health Information Protection Act.

The proposed legislation aims to improve the protection of personal health information generally, in the response to the need for greater transparency and appropriate disclosure of information to a patient during critical incident reviews.

The first section introduces amendments to the Personal Health Information Protection Act, and the second section proposes amendments to current legislation to clarify the use of the Quality of Care Information Protection Act.

Mr. Speaker, if there is something that is very important in the health sector it is the privacy of information that is in the patient's file. Sometimes it is either not understood or there is too much relaxation about these

rules and regulations. Confidentiality is important, but it is also important for health institutions or doctors' offices to have regular training with those who work in these institutions to remind them about the importance and what is a breach.

Sometimes they don't think it's a breach. Their neighbour is hospitalized, so they just go on the floor and take the file, look at the file and read the file. This is a breach, because if the person is not the nurse or doctor responsible for this patient, they have no business looking into the file. So it's very important that institutions have regular training and remind those who work in the health sector what is confidentiality, what is permitted and what is not.

It is also the responsibility of the institution to report if there is a breach. Sometimes they want to have their own evaluation: "It is really a breach? Is it a serious breach? Should we report it, or should we not report it?" They have a responsibility, and the government expects all health information custodians or health care providers who have custody or control of personal health information as part of their job to comply with the privacy and security requirements of the Personal Health Information Protection Act. This means that they must ensure they have the administrative, technical and physical safeguards and information practices in place to adequately protect the privacy and security of the personal health information in their custody and control.

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The Personal Health Information Protection Act does not prescribe what these safeguards must be—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock.

Continue.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, Mr. Speaker, the Personal Health Information Protection Act does not prescribe what these safeguards must be. But the act does require, however, health information custodians to take steps that are reasonable in the circumstances to protect personal health information in their custody or control. "Reasonable in the circumstances" recognizes that health information custodians vary in size, complexity and scope of practice. That's why each of the institutions and doctors' offices have to have their own process to protect the health information of a patient.

There's nothing more private than what is written in your medical file, and it's up to everyone in the institution, in the office, to know their obligation and how to make sure that in no circumstance is there any violation of the privacy and confidentiality rights.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a privilege to stand here and address this particular bill. First of all, I want to commend the minister. The bill apparently follows up on commitments that the minister made back in June to create stronger, more comprehensive protection of health information privacy.

Those are words. To be truthful, he talks about transparency and I agree, but words need to be followed by action—good, solid, concrete action. Obviously, a few things remain to be seen.

I do like the idea, as well, that it makes it mandatory to report privacy breaches. That's very, very important. Unfortunately, sometimes a particular family member who doesn't want to alarm other family members goes in and has a procedure done or something, and receives a phone call. However, another family member takes that call and then finds out what has been going on with the family member. That could, in fact, very well be a breach of confidentiality, and a breach of privacy as well. So we've got a concern about that.

The other thing that I wanted to mention, Speaker, is the fact that Ontario's people do deserve to know they're protected by a health care system that is accountable, transparent and keeps their permanent information private. But again, I look at the whole state of Ontario at this point in time. We have gone from first to worst. We have gone from have to have-not. So it's not surprising that Ontario is one of the last provinces to update legislation to require mandatory reporting of breaches to a privacy body. Eight provinces have already passed legislation.

Again, I commend the minister for bringing this forward. It's time for Ontario to modernize its health care system and make patient-centred care a priority.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I think this is a very important topic. I think it's something we need to address. Specifically, the security of one's health information is absolutely important. In fact, when it comes to security of personal information, I think we could all agree that health information is probably the most important, if not one of the most important.

It raises a broader question about, if we frame this discussion around security of personal information, in the current age of electronic information, digital information and the digital transmission and sharing of information, the security of your personal data becomes all the more important. It also raises concerns around how we share other information. Given certain legislation that encourages information sharing between different agencies, it becomes more important for us to ensure that certain information that's so private and sensitive remains secure.

But it also raises concerns around how we share other information and how we conduct our day-to-day lives. Given the electronic age we live in, given the fact that information is now shared in a digital manner, all of our communications and personal data are now susceptible to sometimes purposeful or malicious forms of interference or surveillance, and sometimes inadvertently because of the manner in which we communicate.

I think that as a government or as legislators, we need to look at how we can ensure that all of our information is more secure by default. Right now, the default is open and insecure. I think we need to look at forms of com-

munication, whether it's the way we use communication through the Web or whether it's through our digital platforms like our cellphones. We need to broadly look at how we can ensure people have the right to security and privacy of their communications and their information, broadly speaking.

This bill is a step in the right direction when it comes to medical information specifically. I think it's a discussion we need to embark on with more detail and more vigorous debate.

Mr. John Fraser: As the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton said, the privacy of our own personal health care information is extremely important to us. I just want to say that I absolutely agree with his point on communications. We treated the mail in a certain way in terms of how we protected that when we started a mail and postal service. Everything we do on the Internet is vulnerable.

I do want to say that my son James works in a records department at a local hospital. There are half paper and half electronic records, and as they convert over, we know that an electronic health record is very important to having integrated care, to give better care to people. It's better for measuring our success in the policies that we have to improve health care in our province.

What comes with that great stuff is a great risk. I think this legislation, by addressing reporting requirements and sanctions for privacy breaches, is the right thing to do. Also, establishing rules and regulations for an electronic health record so there's a consent management framework is a crucial thing to do as well.

I would like to add one piece that maybe hasn't been as mentioned as much in this debate: the transparency of critical incidents. The measures that are in this bill are going to require a person responsible for patient relations to be included on a committee where critical incident reviews are undertaken, that the people affected by that critical incident be interviewed and that information be shared with them. I think that is critical in terms of building trust in our health care system and in our hospitals. This is a very important piece of legislation and I'm very glad to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on some of the debate from the other side of the House today. They shared it with so many people, it's sometimes hard to get the views straight. But generally speaking, the views over there are pretty consistent: they're whatever they are told to say from the corner office on the second floor.

But anyway, look, how important is protecting the privacy of patients? Of course, it's of paramount importance and that's why, in general terms, we're supporting this piece of legislation.

I had the opportunity to speak yesterday on the legislation itself. We talked about the importance of protecting the health records of individuals. How devastating could that be, if someone was suffering from a particular

ailment or illness and wanting to keep that private, and then, by some failure in the system or chicanery on the part of some person involved in the system, that became public? That can be devastating. That's why we need strong legislation.

I will agree that the increases in the penalties for breaching this act are something that is very, very positive and I appreciate the government has done that. Increasing those penalties, of course, acts as a strong deterrent for anyone who is contemplating breaching the act. That's something that I think is hugely important.

At the same time, one of the things I like about this bill—there are lots of things I don't like about the government and not necessarily this bill, but we're not talking about that right now, because I only have a couple of minutes. But one of the things I also like about this bill is the total access to your own medical records, where you're basically going to have ownership of your medical records. That's something that wasn't the tradition.

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I give the medical profession a lot of credit in this too. They have understood over the years that people have taken more ownership, and we have to give them that ownership.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): One of the five speakers has two minutes. Member from Cambridge.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I want to thank those that have spoken in the last few minutes about Bill 119: the members from Ottawa-Orléans, Burlington, Ottawa-Vanier, Chatham-Kent-Essex, Bramalea-Gore-Malton, Ottawa South, and Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

I have to say that the views on this side of the House are united, and they're united in making sure that patient privacy, health records privacy and transparency are upheld.

As a proud registered nurse over the last three decades, I don't take my orders from the corner office in this place. I go by the policies and procedures of my college, the Ontario College of Nurses, and I know that all health professionals do. I know that physicians and all hospital staff are really united in making sure that personal health information is protected.

I'm very proud of this government. I'm glad that we on this side of the House are united in making sure that patients' health information is protected. In this electronic age, with social media there, the ability to move information that should be protected into social media and into the public can be very dangerous. So I'm very glad we're stepping forward to make sure that our patients and our health care records are protected and private.

I am very pleased to see, in summary, that the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, will be amended to make sure that it requires custodians of health records to report breaches to the Information and Privacy Commissioner; that we're removing the six-month limitation for the prosecution of offences; and that the fines are doubled, not only for individuals but also for organizations.

Again, I thank everybody for the debate in the House and look forward to seeing this passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd like to let you know that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

I look forward to the next 10 minutes to chat about Bill 119, the Health Information Protection Act. This is an Act to amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, to make certain related amendments and to repeal and replace the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, 2004.

As you have heard from colleagues, we're generally in support of this, Speaker. I think we all would agree that the people of Ontario deserve to know that they are protected by a health care system that is accountable and transparent and that keeps their personal health information private.

Sometime throughout my 10 minutes, I will be talking about specific issues of health care as well.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, no. Tell us it's not so.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It is so. I'm telling you it is so, because in order to have your health care protected, accountable and transparent, first of all, you need health care. When I look at home, as I mentioned in an earlier member's statement, we have had 350 front-line health care workers at my local hospital cut, including 100 nurses.

In order to have a health care system that's accountable and transparent and that keeps your personal health information private, you first need to be able to get that health information. Very sadly, at our hospital, which just had 60 beds cut—I can tell you, Speaker, that when I was mayor of the city of North Bay, I was pleased to support our council spending \$20 million towards the construction of a brand new hospital. The province, of course, was the 90% partner and we were a 10% partner. To see that brand new hospital have 60 beds eliminated is sad.

I visited some friends in the hospital recently. I often wondered what was meant by that expression "the beds are cut." I honestly did not understand that. The woman that I was visiting said to me—she was in a double room. She said, "Open the curtain and have a look in the room beside." I did, and it was empty. It was amazing. The bed was actually gone and all of the electronics were gone. There was a little table with a phone sitting on it and that was it. That's all that was in the room. I was quite surprised. I took a photo of it, actually.

My point is, in order to have this personal health information that we want to keep confidential, you actually need to have the services.

So we have 60 beds that are cut, 350 workers that are cut—100 nurses. Only recently, a week or so ago, we also had our lab cut in the hospital. That's why I say it's hard to stand here and talk about having your records secure when many of them won't even have a chance to have a record created.

There were only three places in North Bay to have lab work done: two private clinics—those are at their maximums, by the way, at their cap—and the hospital. People

would line up at the hospital to have blood work done. Now only in-patient work is being done in the hospital. So it's very hard to stand here and talk about those records when there are so many in my hometown now that are going to have a hard time even getting that original record made.

Nonetheless, our fragmented health care system continues to fail Ontario's most vulnerable. In 2014, there were 439 cases reported to the Information and Privacy Commissioner's office. Ontario, as you've heard, is one of the last provinces to update legislation to require mandatory reporting of breaches to a privacy body. Eight provinces have already done so and passed legislation. Obviously, we support this because it's time for Ontario to modernize its health care system and make patient-centred care a priority.

Let me segue off onto a more positive aspect in which I thank all three parties. Recently, I had a bill here, Bill 33—Patch For Patch, the fentanyl bill—and because you now need to bring your used fentanyl patches into a pharmacy, it has a lot to do with this. You now need to be processed, if you will. It's much more than just having a prescription. If you want this narcotic, you need to bring your old patch in to stop people from selling those patches. Only this week, again, in my hometown of North Bay, did this program work. A woman was caught trying to bring fake patches to someone so that she can have the real patches and continue with the drug trafficking. This is related to this because we're now capturing more data about people, and we're able to control the use and the spread of a narcotic that killed 133 people in Ontario last year. So I do say thank you to all three parties for their support of my private member's bill.

Already, we're seeing many communities sign up. Although it's becoming mandatory, many are doing it voluntarily until the bill is fully enacted. In my hometown, it saved some lives again this week by having this woman caught. She's still going through the court system now, the beginning of it, and I'll continue to follow up on that with this Legislature because it's a great example of our work with records.

This bill follows up on the commitments the minister made last June. You've heard this. It was intended to create stronger and more comprehensive protection of health information privacy. The bill introduces greater accountability and transparency in the health system about privacy breaches and critical incidents. It introduces a renewed provincial electronic health record privacy framework.

I'll do everything I can to refrain from talking about eHealth records and billion-dollar wastes, because we know that tends to get me off on many of the other billion-dollar boondoggles.

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This bill will make it mandatory to report privacy breaches, as defined in regulation, to the Information and Privacy Commissioner and to the relevant regulatory colleges. And it removes the requirement that prosecu-

tions must be commenced within six months of when the alleged offence occurred.

This bill, as you heard my colleague mention, will double the maximum fines for offences under PHIPA—which, of course, is the Personal Health Information Protection Act—from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for individuals and from \$250,000 to \$500,000 for an organization. It will reintroduce and update the electronic health record privacy framework initially introduced in EPHIPA and as endorsed by the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

The bill will also allow the ministry to disclose information about a patient's narcotics and monitored drug prescriptions to their health care practitioner. Again, I use that as a segue to the fentanyl bill. Patch for Patch will not only cover fentanyl but was written, thankfully, by the Ministry of Health to expand to include other narcotics as they come on to the market over upcoming years. I believe this bill will go a long way towards helping to improve patient care through protecting patient safety.

The Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, was aimed at protecting the privacy of patients, but no one had ever been convicted. Only logic and common sense—and, of course, the media stories that you hear in the last 12 years—there has been more than one—in all of our communities. Certainly, in my hometown, I've read in our local newspaper several stories, but nobody has been convicted. Obviously, there are issues, and this will address many of them. Reporting is currently not mandatory, so there could be many more than the 439 known breaches.

I can go on, but I do want to share my time, as I mentioned.

The lack of consistency in hospital reporting is the last thing I'll discuss. In a survey of 27 hospitals in Hamilton and the GTA, some said that it's not their job. One said that it's the job of the privacy commissioner. Another argued that a police complaint would be a privacy violation in itself.

Obviously, something needs to be done, and I believe this bill goes a long way towards that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 119. I want to share my perspective on Bill 119 and the perspective that I hear from the people who live in Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. Just for context, in over eight years as an elected MPP, I have yet to have a constituent contact my office with a concern over a breach of privacy on their health records. It hasn't happened with me. I'm sure it has happened elsewhere, but I've not had that direct experience.

Although protection of privacy of health care information is indeed important, there are many other things in health care that are also important and, I would say, far more important than just the information. I want to give a contrast between this bill and what I hear in my constituency office. Then, maybe people in this House—

members of the government—can weigh the merits of this bill as compared to something else that they could have done.

Let me start with a medical record example. Brenda moved to Smiths Falls last year. She needed to have her medical records transferred to Smiths Falls, to her new doctor. It took over four months to have those medical records transferred. Brenda was waiting to have desperately needed knee surgery, but she couldn't have the knee surgery done because the doctor needed to have her medical records. It was not a problem about privacy; it was a problem of getting the bloody records. Brenda suffered longer and longer because she couldn't get the medical records. When she finally did, she had to pay 50 bucks to have those medical records transferred. That's a failing.

Elizabeth from Denbigh had to go to hospital for stitches. She went to the emergency room. She has private health insurance. She went back to the emergency room the following week with the proper forms from the insurance company and the doctor at the ER advised her that it would cost \$100 for the doctor to fill out those forms—\$100 to fill out those forms.

Speaker, those are some of the things that I hear in my office, and I'm sure others hear these ones.

Talking about information, Norma Ford from Beckwith has been waiting for a response from the Minister of Health since November, waiting for information. I guess the minister figures it's too private and will not share correspondence with Norma. By the same token, the mayor of Carleton Place has also been looking for a response from the Minister of Health since last summer, and he hasn't received it. These are some of the things that I hear.

Of course, those are examples from my riding, but we also know that this happens throughout Ontario, often with very tragic results. The recent story of Laura Hillier—no relation—from Burlington: She died waiting for a stem cell transplant to treat her leukemia. She didn't die because of a lack of donors; she had many matching donors. Rather, Laura was on a waiting list for a hospital bed and enduring chemotherapy treatments in the meantime, waiting for a hospital bed.

We spend all this time debating a bill on privacy. What actions is the government actually doing to alleviate and prevent harm and tragedy happening to people seeking health care in this province? I would have liked to see them bring forward some tangible actions to help people in this province.

George and Shirley in Napanee: Their doctor retired and left them without a doctor. They're both on medication and they're both on a waiting list with Health Care Connect for a doctor. The walk-in clinics don't want to renew their prescriptions as they're not their patients.

An interesting one from Robert in Yarker: Robert has been advised that his doctor will be leaving the area shortly and he will need to get a new doctor. Robert has serious health issues and can't be without a doctor. He's called every doctor in the area and cannot find a new

doctor yet. He called up Health Care Connect to get his name on the list and Health Care Connect says, "We can't put you on the list until your doctor actually leaves." We have to wait for the tragedy to happen. We have to wait for the consequence to happen before this government agency, which is there to help people, will actually help this person.

Fred in Smiths Falls called me in a panic one night. He had just found out that his wife, who needs cataracts, was not going to get them. The quota had been exhausted. She's on an indefinite waiting list for cataracts. He's fearful that she's going to lose her independence and her mobility, lose her driver's licence and go blind before she'll get her cataracts done.

These are the examples that I see and hear frequently. These are the things that are a failing of this government to address.

1630

I see in this bill that there is now mandatory reporting of a privacy breach. Why is there not mandatory reporting of a tragedy? Why is there not mandatory reporting when there is a failure in our health care system? I see that there are these huge penalties and fines being imposed for a privacy breach, yet there are no consequences for failures in our health care system, no consequences for those examples that I've shared—misplaced priorities, Speaker, absolutely misplaced priorities by this government. They could be doing more, they ought to be doing more and they must do more—not just photo-op politics. Politics and governance are important to people, not just media spots and photo ops.

Linda from Carleton Place was on a waiting list to get a knee. She was advised by her doctor's office that they had reached their quota that year. She's hoping that there will be more quota for more knees in May or June of this year after the new budgetary allotments are put forward.

I see the parliamentary secretary listening to what I'm saying. These are all real cases. These are cases that are not old and dated; these are ones that are current that my office is working on.

John from Perth Road: He was on for over a year, waiting for a knee. I could go on.

One of the most tragic ones was the new dialysis unit in Smiths Falls. We had people travelling from Perth through Smiths Falls to Ottawa to get dialysis. They couldn't get into the dialysis centre in their hometown or close by. You had people from Carleton Place driving through Smiths Falls to go to Kingston to get dialysis, not being able to access it.

Speaker, these are the things that I would like to see this government address, and address quickly. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's a great pleasure to rise on Bill 119, the security of one's health care information act. I believe, by listening over the last few days, that we have support of all three parties on the importance of making sure that nobody can get to our health care records. The

security of it is important. You only have to look right here in Toronto to what happened to a former mayor, Rob Ford, and what that did, and it went right across the country.

But the real reason why I'm standing is that I would like to talk to what my colleagues have said for the last 20 minutes, in particular the former mayor of North Bay when he talked about a new hospital opening. They had 60 less beds. They had less nurses. Those are the things that are happening in Ontario. I'd like to say to all my colleagues here that I firmly believe there is nothing more important and nothing more precious than making sure we get our health care right. We have a crisis in health care. We might not want to admit it—some parties might want to—but we have a crisis in health care.

I got lucky last night. I went out for dinner last night to Donatello, a nice Italian restaurant in Toronto—great owner. But I ran into four nurses from Windsor and they talked to me about 169 of their co-workers who got laid off on Family Day. They were not feeling good, but they said something very interesting. Records are important, but front-line care is important. They are concerned about what's going to happen in the hospitals in Windsor. They talked about an aging population: our parents, our grandparents, someone like myself; I'm a grandfather, so I'm getting up there. They talked about long-term care in the hospitals. We have to listen to the front-line workers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond on Bill 119. I would like to say to the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, we all have in our offices situations where people come to us and they're having problems accessing the health care system. That's not uncommon. It's a big, complex system. It doesn't always work. We have a lot of people working in that, and where you have people working, you can have people fall between the cracks. We've all seen that, and failures, and we have to continue to work towards making sure that's better.

I don't want to go the route of "You did this, we did that." What I simply want to say is, when each party in this Legislature was in government, they grappled with the same things and they made decisions based on what they believed was the best thing to do for the whole of the system. Remember, we're spending about half of government's money and we all made decisions that affected people's care. We all did that.

With all due respect, I want to put that out there. That needs to be something that people keep in mind. That doesn't mean that you don't continue to press for what you believe is important, but to take into consideration that we've all been there and we've all had to make very difficult decisions. In times when there's an economic crisis, there are tough decisions to make. As members, we all have to continue to work hard.

I agree totally on the medical records. This bill makes access to your medical records yours. It does provide for critical incident reporting. It puts some structure to that,

where the patient and the family affected are involved in that. They get that information; that information is shared so it doesn't happen in other hospitals. I think that's a very important part of the legislation. I'd encourage the member to take a look at that because I think it will go to really improve health care in our province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I want to comment on the two speakers from our party, from North Bay and from Lanark-Frontenac and the rest of it.

Those are stories we hear all the time: the hospital in North Bay that's built with scarce funds. The same thing in my riding, in Winchester: extensions put on, a new ICU built, a big ceremony with the opening. Approximately a year later, they're closed. Why? The hospitals are sworn to secrecy. When you ask them personally in social services, they're told that if the story appears in the press, it could be worse next year.

We aren't getting the feedback. Actually, they were upset when I reported that 25% of the beds were closed, because they didn't want that public. But that's what happened.

We hear the government talk about the lack of doctors. It's not a lack of doctors. I see doctors in our area working in the US because they can't get operating time; the orthopedic surgeon who will not take new knee replacements because there's no use making people wait years, he said. This is not a lack of doctors. This is a lack of operating time, and that's fine. I know that all parties have done—but then, let's not talk about it; let's not just say the problem doesn't exist. We see the problems every day.

The issue of medical records: I was in one of the local hospitals the other day. They're spending money looking at what medical record operator they would use. They're trying to choose one, trying to choose the same one the Ottawa Civic is using. They haven't made up their mind; they're still in the process. They're going to have to go ahead with one. Why doesn't the province determine which one we use? Everyone uses it; the eHealth record problem is solved.

The Americans do it, different places do it. This government has got to make a decision and it's got to do something that's out there for the patient.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from London-Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, health is always one of the most sensitive topics we can debate in the Legislature, at the kitchen table, when you're at a picnic. People talk about their health all the time, so privacy is paramount when we're talking about patient records in a health institution.

I think back. The member from Nipissing talked about eHealth. That was supposed to be the start of electronic records, and that was a costly mess. Then I think about SAMS, the recent change for computer records under community and social services. That also didn't go smoothly.

1640

This side of the House kept asking this government to identify those problems when those changes were implemented, and there was a lot of denial there. I hope, when we are actually proceeding with this bill, that when people come to consultations and when there are questions on this side of the House, this government pays attention and stops denying when there are problems. You actually earn more respect when someone indicates a problem and you solve the problem, Speaker, and I'll point out the example today.

This morning, the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London asked a question about a very important program that was successful in the health care system in London where the funding was quietly withdrawn. I just read in the paper this afternoon that apparently that funding has now been reinstated, so that mental health patients can continue to enjoy the program that allows them to integrate into the community; there's peer support there. It was shown as a successful program and actually saved the health care system money.

That's an example of us on this side of the House—yes, we're critics, we're the opposition, but we do have legitimate concerns, and if the government on that side of the House doesn't pay attention to those concerns, problems become bigger and harder to correct.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nipissing has two minutes.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to also thank fellow members from Niagara Falls, Ottawa South, Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry and London-Fanshawe for their thoughtful contributions to this debate.

I think we've heard loud and clear, especially from our member from Addington—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Lennox.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, the long name. I'll give the short name, Addington.

Interjection: Lanark-Frontenac.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington—when he talked in detail about the calls that weren't made, the issues that weren't dealt with and the patients who weren't seen. Again, Speaker, I close with this because I can only emphasize that if you're talking about patient health care records and their vital security, you need to be able to have the patients either in a doctor's office, in emergency, in a clinic, in a nurse practitioner facility, many of the telemedicine opportunities that we have in Ontario or in the hospital—you need to have access to that health care.

I think of my hometown with these 60 beds. Again, it's a brand new hospital. It's a hundreds-of-millions-of-dollars hospital that is built and has 60 beds closed. I think of the people—my mother included, incidentally—who are admitted in an emergency, are lined up in the hallway for 12 hours at a time and can't get access because those beds are closed.

Speaker, I leave it at the thought of the 82-year-old woman waiting there to have health care so they can have those vital records.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand in my place on behalf of the citizens of Kitchener–Waterloo and lend my thoughts about Bill 119, and also bring their voices to this place.

Bill 119, as you know and as you've heard, will of course be dealing with the privacy of patient information after some high-profile breaches. This piece of legislation is looking to correct some of those breaches. The need to protect patient information stored in electronic health records is a long-standing issue in this place for a number of reasons that are becoming quite well known. I would point to some systemic issues, both within the Ministry of Health and, actually, the Ministry of Finance, and, finally, the need to improve transparency and accountability when medical errors occur.

I've been listening to the debate all afternoon, and I find it really interesting, because the government side of the House doesn't necessarily want to hear about the context of the health care system in which this debate is currently taking place. There are reasons why Bill 119 is needed that point to a very fragmented and, quite honestly, in some cases, broken system of health care.

I know the government will point to the dollars, because the health care budget is the highest amount of money. It's over half—actually it's \$52 billion; it's a lot of money. We have a growing body of evidence, namely the Auditor General's reports where she has reported back to this Legislature, indicating that there are serious breaches of trust. That is the context.

We just came through a provincial budget consultation process. The finance committee met for seven days. We spent one full week together on planes, trains and automobiles, if you will, and we heard from over 146 people. We have the documents and reports from those individuals. We were in Hamilton, Windsor, Thunder Bay and North Bay, and we even went to Ottawa, and then we had two full days here.

Health care was the predominant issue that we heard about from citizens, from medical and health care stakeholders, front-line stakeholders and hospital associations. They stay with you, because health care comes down to trust. It comes down to trust. When a breach of trust does occur, as has happened in this province for over a decade, people are wary. They're concerned. They are nervous about this system.

But the other side of the coin, and I think the government side would agree with me, is that you actually don't know how important these systems are until you need them. If you have experienced a breach of trust around privacy as a patient, as a citizen—I have a citizen who is going through this process—it feels like a violation, Mr. Speaker. It does. When personal information is shared between parties, it feels like a violation of their rights. That is how they see it.

The theme that I would like to draw upon is that at the budget consultation, people were talking about their values as citizens in the province of Ontario, and they

were very much connected to having access—full access—to a health care system which is well funded, responsive and compassionate, whether you're talking about hospice care, long-term care, home care or pain management.

Unfortunately, it does appear that this government is going to be moving ahead with the budget. We haven't even fully recovered from this budget, Mr. Speaker, yet here we are. A budget is going to come down next Thursday. The finance committee has not written their report to the finance minister—a complete departure from the tradition of this House. To the best of my knowledge, this is the earliest that a budget will be coming down from the finance minister—from any government—for no good reason.

If there was ever a good reason for this government to pay attention to the voices of the people of this province, if there was ever a government that needed the assistance of the people of this province, the lived experience of this province, it would be this government. This government needs all the help they can get to craft a budget which is responsive to the needs of the people of this province. Unfortunately, it looks like that is not going to happen. That does not lend itself to a culture, or to a feeling, to the emotion, to the reality of feeling that you're being listened to.

On health care, I know that my colleagues will agree with me, because we heard primarily about health care, especially around the frozen budgets.

People will say, "What does this have to do with privacy? What does this have to do with ensuring that the quality-of-care information is shared between hospitals in a respectable and responsible manner?"

It all comes down to resources. Everything in this place comes down to resources. Everything in this place comes down to honouring your commitment to patients first, and to ensuring that those resources are spent responsibly. Ensuring that privacy is protected requires resources.

1650

One of the strongest delegations, I have to admit, came from the CEO from the hospital in Windsor. He told us that their hospital's hydro costs increased by \$700,000 this year alone. One year over, it's an increase of \$700,000. Their total hydro bill at Windsor Regional Hospital is \$4.2 million. He says, "All funding for Windsor Regional Hospital and for hospitals across the province has been frozen for the past five years."

He went on to say, "When the overall pie is frozen and the areas that are not growing in population are funding those areas that are growing in population, we can't continue; we can't sustain it." And then he went on to say, "we can't cut any more."

Our concerns around Bill 119—I do want to say at the outset, is that of course we will be supporting this legislation. It is long overdue, especially on the privacy of patients, which, again, leads to trust.

But at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, you have to look at the entire health care budget holistically, because

if you're going to ask hospitals and hospital administrators who are already saying, "We can't do anything more. Our budgets are stretched. We are already overregulated as hospitals"—the amount of paper that hospital administrators are pushing around hospitals would astound you. That is all just about, in my estimation, liability and litigation. And so whatever method is going to be instilled through Bill 119 needs to be a very clear, very streamlined piece of legislation which is not onerous, but which puts the patient first. Those are our concerns on the issue of privacy of patients.

The issue of quality of care of information: Bill 119 replaces the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, QCIPA, to respond to recent public criticism after a scathing investigation by the Toronto Star, as well as recommendations made by an expert panel review report. This government has broken the record on review panels, on special task forces, on blue-ribbon committees and on round tables. We have enough information that needs to be acted on.

Patients and families sometimes feel—I have one case in my office—that they don't get full answers about what went wrong in a particular incident in a hospital, including the deaths of loved ones and what will be done to improve care in the future. This is actually in the legislation. In the last two budget cycles, a woman has come forward. Her mother died in hospital. She is absolutely haunted. She is haunted by that death because there was a system breakdown. And yet, the results of the review of that death have never been shared with her.

Now, you have to admit that this is a nightmare situation. She came the last two years to listen to the budget. I think this year she probably just gave up, but it is part of the grieving process. She deserves answers. More importantly, if mistakes were made, as her binder like this suggested, and if there was a break in the system, then that review needs to be made public. It needs to be shared with health care professionals so that that doesn't happen again.

There's a need for hospital systems to share information in a responsible way, for critical incidents to be reviewed so that those same mistakes do not happen again. This is not an unreasonable request; it's a long-standing issue.

As the member mentioned, these are large systems and mistakes do happen. People are human and they work in these very stressful conditions. But there is a responsibility to follow through and to make it right, and sometimes making it right involves a responsible way to share the findings of those reviews.

I mentioned the expert panel review report. The report identified 15 events that should never occur in hospitals. I know that sometimes the government side doesn't want to hear this, but in order to address a problem, you actually have to admit that you have a problem. That is why the investigation was important. It's important to look at the data; it's important to look at the evidence.

Remember when the Premier, in her original speech from the throne, said that she was going to be invested in

evidence-based decision-making? There must have been parentheses after that that said "when it was convenient" to her, because we do have evidence on Hydro One that it's not in the best interest of the province, and yet this government continues to go down that route.

The 15 incidents, though, I need to get on the record because they're serious. In the province of Ontario there was surgery on the wrong body part or the wrong patient, or conducting the wrong procedure. There was the wrong tissue, biological implant or blood product given to a patient. In this instance, it was done by a private company, and privatization is the second theme that I would like to draw upon, which we also heard through the budget process.

There was an unintended foreign object left in a patient following a procedure, and patient death or serious harm arising from a list of circumstances while under health care. This pertains to this piece of legislation, because the legislation is trying to correct this, but you have to hear what the problem is in order to address the problem.

"Ultimately," one RN said, "I can tell you that the type of Liberal budget cuts we've seen over the last 10 years do not help these situations." We're talking about stress in hospital systems. That stress is real, and these are the people who are on the front line. They want to make sure that you are hearing what they have experienced.

In September 2015—this is one of the most recent reports, and this was done by Health Quality Ontario—they go on to cite wrong tissue, unintended foreign objects, patient death or serious harm arising from the use of improperly sterilized instruments or equipment provided by the health care facility.

This one in particular I want to raise, because there is a growing trend, and it's incredibly concerning for us as New Democrats, to contract out health care services to the private sector. When that happens, we lose the ability to hold those private companies accountable for their practices. We lose the oversight and the quality control, and when mistakes happen, because they are so focused on profit—and they're making a lot of money in the province of Ontario, I have to tell you, which was also confirmed by the Auditor General—this compromises patient care.

In looking at this information, if you have access to it—that's the key piece—there is a lack of accountability to ensure that those practices and those procedures are corrected. To date, this government has not figured that out.

There was a patient death or serious harm as a result of pharmaceutical errors—this is a well-known issue around the chemotherapy drugs—such as the wrong route administration of chemotherapy, an overdose of hydro-morphone, and an inadvertent injection of epinephrine.

There was a patient death or serious harm as a result of failure to identify and treat metabolic disturbances, any stage III or stage IV pressure ulcer, bedsores—I'm hearing more about bedsores. I know more about bedsores than I ever thought I would and more than I

ever wanted to know. But quite honestly, the connection around the holistic view of health care—if you are not ensuring that these sores are actually taken care of, that best practices are put in place and that the government, through the Ministry of Health, is actually holding these companies accountable for quality care and not for maintaining that profit margin, this is where the system starts to break down.

I understand. It was uncomfortable, quite honestly, in some of these budget consultations. It was uncomfortable for the government to hear, because they are heart-breaking stories. The member from North Bay mentioned it. He said that people came in and shared their stories of pain and heartbreak, of a medical system that failed them.

It all comes back to resources. It all comes back to ensuring that front-line health care providers are well trained, but also are not working in conditions that create a huge amount of stress.

What we are seeing, though, because those working conditions are those health care conditions—this just actually happened last week—is that Waterloo region hospital workers are at higher risk of patient attacks. These are stats that show that this is a growing trend. This goes back to resources. Everything goes back to health care resources.

The need to protect patient information stored in electronic health records: When this originally did pass—I don't need to go all the way down memory lane on this—that minister did have to resign, because due diligence was not maintained throughout the contracting out of that process.

1700

These were early days. These were lessons that should have been absorbed by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Health around having the appropriate oversight with the ability to audit and control costs and maintain, quite honestly, a conflict-of-interest standard which would meet any other business expectations. That did not happen.

A lot of people during this process found that their own doctor moved their medical health records off-site because they started fresh with electronic. This happened to my own family. I got a bill for \$95 to get my family's health records back. I had to buy back my own health records. I stubbornly decided not to do that. I'm sure that surprises many of you.

I do want to touch on the need to improve transparency and accountability when medical errors occur. I'm actively our health critic. We're tracking these breaches and errors. You can see a direct line of accountability and a direct correlation to the privatization of health care to these medical mistakes. You can. There are currently some legal challenges before the Ministry of Health on this issue, Mr. Speaker, but when Ed Clark has turned his sights from Hydro One and liquor—one day, we will stop talking about wine and beer and marijuana in this place perhaps. He has publicly mused about the need for greater private sector involvement in the health care system, and this is a really interesting piece. Mr. Clark is

suggesting that, in order to fix the problem of health care which began with privatization, we go right back to privatization. It is not a solution; I just want to say that openly.

We have a piece of legislation with a goal of looking to address the privacy of patients' information after some high-profile breaches. We have a piece of legislation that is looking to address and protect patient information stored in electronic health records, and we have a piece of legislation that needs to improve transparency and accountability when medical errors do occur.

Bill 119 has good bones for that. It's a piece which is crafted, I think, in essence to address these core issues. We, of course, will be supporting it, but we will be making some amendments. Each time, we will be getting up and addressing the real human costs of not addressing these issues in a responsible way through a publicly funded health care system, where the government does have oversight and a direct responsible relationship between the patient and the funding and resources that are flowing from this place. This is the imperative and this is the value that people in this province want. They want a health care system that is responsive and which is responsible. And right now, we have a lot of work to go in that regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond again and a pleasure to respond to the member from Waterloo.

Without repeating myself, I want to reiterate that every party has been there. We've all been there, trying to allocate what scarce resources we have to health care. To simply put critical incidents down to a failure of funding is overly simplistic. Critical incidents occur all across health care. I think it's important to remember that, and it's overly simplistic to focus on that one area.

Currently, right now, we're in a dispute with our province's physicians. I know that the party opposite is continuing to advocate for them. The challenge is, we only have so much money, so it's: Where do we put it that's best going to help the people we serve? We can't do everything. What happens from the members across, with all due respect, is—and I get it—"I'm advocating for whoever I can advocate for. I'm not worried about how that all fits into a budget or how that all gets allocated as a resource. I'm here to advocate." I get it; I just want to put that out there.

I do want to say that, as far as critical incidents go, I know exactly what the member is talking about. I have constituents in my riding who have had critical incidents happen and have not had a resolution because what happened in that incident in terms of investigation was not reported to them. That is just simply wrong. Evidence shows that when you fully disclose critical incidents, actually, your exposure to litigation drops. It's not a natural thing for a lot of administrators to believe.

I think it's a really important piece of legislation and I'm glad that the member across supports it and focused on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Question and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I appreciate the comments, not only made by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, but also from the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health. He says he gets it. I get it as well. What I get is the fact that the debt in this province has risen over the last 13 years from \$125 billion to \$300 billion. I get the fact that he's saying that they're in a money crunch. I get that. My question is, why are they in a money crunch? We all know, and some of the things—

Mr. John Yakubuski: Mismanagement.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Well, it's been mismanagement. You're right. It's mismanagement in a lot of different files throughout.

I think that we do need to have quicker response time for our medical records. But do you know the thing that really bothers me, Speaker? I've gone and spoken with many, many seniors, as an example—because I do “Sing Along with Rick” and “Caroling with Rick.” I did about 19 different homes around Christmastime and I spoke to these people. I said, “You know what? Some 30, 40, 50 years ago, you helped make Ontario the great province that it once was. Unfortunately, now, as I advocate on your behalf for more funds, more health care dollars, it's becoming more and more difficult.” To me, that is a very unfair way of treating those who once made this province great: reducing the number of health care dollars that they rightly deserve to have. To me, it's almost like we're going to punish you—because people are living longer.

I think that this bill is a good start. It's a good bill and we will support it. We do believe, though, that there are amendments that will need to be added to this particular bill, because we can't continue to go from first to worst in many areas, and health care costs will only continue to increase over the years come.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have to say it's always a pleasure to rise and weigh in on a bill, especially after comments were made by my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo. She always brings a very well-researched and thoughtful contribution to any debate, and this was no doubt just like the other times that she weighs in.

I have to say that the timing of this bill, Bill 119, I personally find very interesting. At a time when the Liberals are content to push more and more privatization in the province of Ontario, they're trying to shift the focus away from the privatization that's going on and focus on what's happening within our system and how can we manage that and make people feel content that their information is being stored and respected, all the while continuing their privatization agenda, which is also potentially exposing people in other areas. I find that a little interesting.

One of the other salient points that my colleague made was that ensuring that information is protected requires resources. At the time that this bill is brought forward,

we're seeing upheaval, chaos and cutbacks through our health care system, and it's all because of this Liberal government. In order to do this properly, we need to have the resources. I can't see how, with cuts to our overall health system, we're going to be able to do that. Again, it very much feels like it's a case of trying to get people to focus on some of the positive things and kind of putting a rosy spin on some of the real negative and, many would view, scary transformations that are happening within our health care system.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today and speak again on this bill. I just want to acknowledge my colleague from Ottawa South, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, for his words. I feel that he encapsulated the discussion beautifully by focusing on the fact that we're all trying to make decisions to improve the system.

I would just like to spend a little bit of time and bring us back to the focus of the information that is within this piece of legislation. It will improve personal health information generally, and it responds to the need for greater transparency and appropriate disclosure of information to patients during critical incident reviews.

The first section introduces amendments to strengthen the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, as well as introduce rules and governance for shared electronic health records. The second section proposes amendments to current legislation to clarify the use of the Quality of Care Information Protection Act. It will also set requirements to improve transparency toward patients when a critical incident occurs.

We've got three hospitals in Kingston and the Islands. It's very important that those hospitals have the information they need in order to deliver adequate and effective care to patients. I think that this piece of legislation will assist with that and protect patient information at the same time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo: two minutes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the members from Chatham–Kent–Essex, Kenora–Rainy River, Kingston and the Islands, and Ottawa South.

I just want to say that I didn't mean to leave you with the impression that I was only talking about resources, because I also mentioned the issue around reporting. The issue around reporting, which is incredibly relevant to this piece of legislation, is that when you contract it out, those arm's-length contracts are a divide around accountability and around reporting, especially when profit is the driver. I share your concern around disclosure of critical incidents, but that is less likely to happen when you don't have the oversight. That's my case against privatization.

My other case against privatization is that it costs more. It ends up costing the people of this province more. There is also a human cost to privatization to the people

who contracted C. difficile and the people who were given the wrong chemotherapy drugs. That lack of oversight has a human cost.

It's true: There is a cost to delivering public health care correctly with integrity. There is also a cost not to. When you don't fund front-line health care, there is this trickle-out effect into the community, which we heard about during budget consultations, that is heartbreaking.

You have a Minister of Health who says that hospitals are only for acute care. That's what he says, but that is where people end up. They end up in the hospital because there isn't a system of hospice care, there isn't a comprehensive pain management strategy, there isn't a long-term-care system that is responsive to an aging demographic and there isn't an addictions or mental health strategy that keeps people out of hospital.

So there is a cost to not funding the community and saying to people, "Stay out of the hospital," when they have nowhere else to go, and I will leave it at that. There is nothing more political than health care, but there is nothing more important in the province of Ontario, as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Further debate? Last call: Further debate?

Mr. Hoskins has moved second reading of Bill 119, An Act to amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, to make certain related amendments and to repeal and replace the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, 2004.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

I have to call in the members. It will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1715 to 1716.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A little late on the bell, but that's okay.

I have a vote for deferral. This is standing order 28(h). They request that the second reading of Bill 119 be deferred until deferred votes on February 18, 2016.

WASTE-FREE ONTARIO ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 16, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to enact the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016 and the Waste Diversion Transition Act, 2016 and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant la Loi de 2016 sur la récupération des ressources et l'économie circulaire et la Loi transitoire de 2016 sur le réacheminement des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): When this was last attended to, it was, I believe, with the official opposition.

Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to take this opportunity to address Bill 151, the Waste-Free Ontario Act. Today, I would like to highlight the need for a fundamental reform to increase recycling across Ontario, protect our environment today and into the future, and create good, well-paying jobs throughout the green economy.

For far too long, our province's waste diversion rate has been hopelessly stalled at 25%. While other provinces, like BC, make the right policy choices, Ontario unfortunately falls further and further behind. It's not hard to see why. Instead of empowering the markets to recover materials and recycle them into new products, Kathleen Wynne has done the opposite.

For more than a decade, this government has relied on failed anti-market policies that have held Ontario back from becoming the environmental leader it could be and really should be. To turn this situation around, the Ontario PCs brought forward a bold new plan in 2012 to increase recycling and reduce waste through innovation and competition among businesses in the private sector. Our plan was very clear: Government should set measurable and achievable recycling targets for businesses, establish environmental standards and enforce the rules. Aside from that, government should get out of the way.

I must say, Speaker, you've never looked better in that chair.

Now, back to the debate at hand. Our plan was based on the clear understanding that the recycling industry is a business, not a government program. We knew that, to move forward, the market shouldn't be tied down with red tape. It should be opened up to encourage competition, increase awareness, as well as efficiency, and advance environmental protection.

Just yesterday, the minister mentioned that Bill 151 is the biggest shift in policy seen in this Legislature for some time. It's important that everyone listening today understands the reason for this shift, and that is because the Liberals have finally acknowledged their repeated and long-standing failures on waste diversion. When it comes right down to it, we are pleased to see that the government, however grudgingly, is willing to embrace the common-sense approach we put forward in 2012. This government has adopted key ideas from the PC recycling plan as it reads today in Bill 151. But I have to be clear: We still have concerns. We still have things to talk through. Although we welcome the government's major policy reversal, we remain opposed to all instances of unnecessary regulation, bureaucracy and government intervention that still exist in Bill 151. I will outline these areas in much greater detail later in my speech.

First of all, I would like to talk about why waste diversion is very important to me and my riding. At the crux of it all, it's about jobs and value-added business models that will drive local economies. We can never

lose sight of any policy made in this House. We've got to focus on jobs, the business models must be costed out and we have to drive our local economies.

To that end, it's interesting because, just last week when I attended a policy meeting hosted in Huron county by the Christian Farmers of Ontario, they were asking where this current government stands on biomass. It seems that that whole initiative, if you will, and that whole complement to a comprehensive energy mix seems to have stalled a little bit as well. We have one biomass generator in my riding just outside of Walkerton, and that family, the Frook family, has worked very hard to get it up and running. I applaud them for it. I've enjoyed the tours that I've had of that facility. It works. It's a combination of biomass that generates energy, and this one is successfully hooked to the grid.

I have to tell you that when the provincial association visited that facility a couple of years ago, I did hear some concerns from the participants in that particular tour that they were frustrated at the direction of this particular government because, when it comes to biomass generation, people want to see that it's bankable and predictable in order to invest in that type of energy generation. But today, sadly, in 2016, that whole concept of energy generation is not bankable or predictable, and people have walked away from the opportunities that they thought were bright.

We have a trend here. There are many different people who, for lack of a sustainable plan that's concrete—people are turning away from Ontario. Whether it's investing in biomass generation or investing in manufacturing, that trend—that thread—far extends into so many sectors that are driving our economy in a precarious direction.

In terms of other small businesses, Huron–Bruce is also home to a number of used-tire depots. We have had people out to meet with them to discuss their concerns. While there was maybe some progression made during those discussions, there is still a lot of frustration over all of the red tape and the lack of oversight into the agencies responsible for facilitating recycling. We do have to take a serious look at that as well.

Speaker, I need to carry on. While I touched on specifics from my great riding of Huron–Bruce, I would also like to point out the importance of understanding the diversity of Ontario's geographic landscape as well. Currently, Ontario's municipalities are working collaboratively to deliver waste management services. Recognizing the important role that our municipalities have to play in making Ontario's waste diversion efforts more efficient is crucial. We have to treat municipalities as good partners, and respect them as such.

However, differences such as population density, number of construction projects, or commercial-to-residential space ratios all contribute to the differences between rural and urban communities and can create unique needs with respect to waste diversion. According to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which we all know as AMO, municipal recycling programs vary,

depending on what is most efficient for the community. Some collect curbside while others depend on depots. What is collected in the blue box can also vary depending on the sorting equipment available, the size of the community and access to markets for recyclable materials.

We need to get waste diversion right because we have diminishing landfill capacity and we rely on the United States to take roughly a quarter of our garbage output every year. That translates into lost jobs, lost revenue and ultimately a weaker local economy.

I'd also like to point out that another important reason we must work with municipalities to decrease the amount of waste that is not being recovered is the whole issue of end-of-life licensed landfills. Since 1989, Ontario has been consistently closing landfills. Developing alternatives to these facilities has been encumbered by increasing costs and lengthy approval and assessment processes. Recovering a greater amount of waste and looking to other sectors, such as IC&I, to accomplish this will help alleviate the diminishing land capacity to store it and allow municipalities to free up funds for other projects that would benefit their communities.

Further, according to Stats Canada, in 2008 Ontario ranked fifth out of eight provinces in efforts to keep waste from ending up in landfills, diverting only 22.6%. To put that in perspective, Nova Scotia led the pack with a diversion rate of 45%, more than double what ours was at that time. This was followed in order by New Brunswick at 35.8%, British Columbia at 34.9% and Quebec at 28.6%. When looked at in these terms, it is clear that under Liberal stewardship, Ontario has been failing to uphold its waste reduction and recycling obligations. Speaker, we can do better; we must do better.

As I mentioned earlier, the goal then is not only to reduce our carbon emissions but to increase capacity to recover waste. Many provinces, such as Manitoba, have recently implemented plans aimed at reducing waste. In particular, I want to focus on their Recycling and Waste Reduction discussion paper from 2014, which I think has set the bar quite high on what a strategy on waste management should look like. It's a strategy that we should look to as an example to be followed.

The government of Manitoba has identified clear targets, such as their aim to cut per capita waste in half by 2020. It outlined a workable timeline which I was asking about earlier today, but I unfortunately did not get a clear answer. It also highlighted key actionable strategies that the government, industry and individuals can undertake to ensure the success of the program and the benefits it will bring to their province economically, and both socially and environmentally. They also found areas to improve monitoring efforts.

In developing a draft strategy, these are core areas that any government should have clear messaging on. As we've seen today, while this government has done their best, they haven't quite hit the mark and their messaging is all over the page.

But now I would like to turn to my next point, which is that in facilitating changes to increase recycling, we

must account for the economics of this process and the commodity markets.

With regard to the economics of recycling and commodity markets, according to the Ontario Waste Management Association, Ontario exports roughly four million tonnes of waste to the US. These are waste processing facilities primarily in Michigan and New York. This is an industry that generates \$2.5 billion in annual revenue and employs about 11,000 labourers. What does this mean? It represents a significant loss to Ontario's economy. In a May 2014 report released by the Conference Board of Canada, analysts found that if waste diversion in Ontario were to reach 60%, as this government had aimed to do by 2008—which was a few years ago, if you would agree with that, Speaker—it could support 13,000 jobs and contribute an additional \$1.5 billion to our provincial GDP. But clearly this government still hasn't gotten it right.

Waste diversion has evolved. It has evolved beyond the three Rs that we know as reduce, reuse and recycle, and it's imperative that we all adapt and adopt an additional R which ties in recovery.

AMO further reinforced these job numbers in their backgrounder from September 2015, Waste Diversion—An Ongoing Success Story, where they found that job creation could reach as high as seven jobs for every 1,000 tonnes of diverted waste, as opposed to less than one job for every 1,000 tonnes sent to the landfill, which is, sadly, under this Liberal government, our current reality.

It's important to recognize that trading markets for post-consumer recycled goods tend to fluctuate from month to month. For example, according to Waste360, in mid-2014, the national average price of post-consumer natural high-density polyethylene, HDPE, was trading at roughly 56 cents per pound. In January 2015, this had dropped to 25 cents per pound. It had risen once again in July 2015 to trade at 34 cents a pound.

Another example can be seen in the trading price of post-consumer PET beverage bottles and jars. In mid-2014, it was trading at 19 cents per pound, dropping to 13.5 cents in April 2015, yet rising again in July to 14.5 cents per pound.

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Post-consumer product trading markets can be volatile, setting industry highs one day and record lows the next. But by recovering these materials in our own province instead of exporting them to processing sites such as those in Michigan and New York, we could help industries not only manage their environmental impact; we can help them get back and have a competitive edge, save costs on production and encourage them to invest in other areas, such as research and development or green technologies.

The key point here is that industry experts know how to best monitor these trends and act on them. Ultimately, we need to let industry manage these markets since it has the skills and knowledge to do so. We have to stop government interference, and there has been a lot of interference. Under this Liberal government, red tape has

grown exponentially. Ontario has seen more than 300,000 manufacturing jobs disappear, its long-term credit downgraded from AA- to A+, and hydro rates increased by 80% since this Liberal government assumed office in 2002.

On top of all these shortcomings, unfortunately, this government has plans to introduce an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan—although they've waffled a little bit as of yesterday and today on the kickoff to that particular plan—despite promises during the federal election by Premier Wynne to cancel it if enhancements are made to the existing Canada Pension Plan.

This plan, the ORPP, is expected to cost our province an estimated 54,000 jobs and has been opposed by many of Ontario's leading industry experts. Most notably, there is an association that is the umbrella group for many of these industries, known as the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. In a letter drafted to the Premier in June of 2015 and signed by more than 150 members, the OCC stated that only 26% of employers in the province believed they could shoulder the burden of this payroll tax.

On top of this, the Liberal government also has plans to introduce a cap-and-trade scheme. Although I think the Premier more adequately described it earlier today, we'll stick with "cap-and-trade scheme." Anyways, it will see Ontarians burdened with further costs on their everyday lives.

Last week, the Liberals made an announcement committing \$92 million to do home retrofits from the Green Investment Fund, which is to be funded by the proceeds of cap-and-trade. Mr. Speaker, we haven't seen a plan from this government for their cap-and-trade scheme. We haven't seen a cost-benefit analysis on their cap-and-trade scheme. I submit to you, Speaker, that Ontarians should not let the government continue to play games with money they haven't even collected. With no plan even announced, why is this Liberal government already spending this money? Many people would have answers to that.

I have to say, Speaker, with all of these initiatives that I have mentioned aimed at taking money out of the pockets of taxpayers, it is no wonder that OCC found, in their Emerging Stronger 2016 report, that only 30% of Ontario's businesses have faith in this Liberal government to strengthen the economy—only 30%. I think that translated into the overwhelming win that we saw in Whitby–Oshawa last week. I congratulate our friend and colleague Lorne Coe on his overwhelming win, and I can't wait to welcome him to this very Legislature on Monday.

But, Speaker, going back, I mentioned the waste diversion initiatives because we have to worry about clear examples of Liberal failure. To Ontarians, when we think about all the failures that we have seen—the inability of the Liberals to get e-health right, the inability to have a government manage properly the hard-pressed dollars that have been squandered on high-priced subsidies for energy we don't need, and scandal after scandal—

I would suggest to Ontarians, sadly, to fasten your seat belts and hang on to what's left in your wallet.

As I mentioned before, the waste management sector contributes \$2.5 billion in annual revenue to our provincial GDP and employs roughly 11,000 people. The last thing we want to see is these numbers diminished, when they should, in fact, be increased, because the Liberals mishandled yet another piece of legislation. Time and again, this government proves that they can't get things right, and we just can't trust them to get it right in the future because of their dismal past record.

I could go on and on about that, but I would now like to turn for a moment to the role that Ontario's industrial, commercial and institutional sectors play in relation to waste diversion. In his 2011 report "What a Waste: Failing to Engage Waste Reduction Solutions," then-Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller found that Ontario's IC&I sectors were responsible for approximately 60% of the province's total waste output, but had a dismal diversion rate of 13%. Now, 13% might not sound too bad to the environmental minister, given that it accounts for a little more than half of the total provincial diversion rate, but it's a whole lot worse when you consider that it has been on a steady decline from 19% since 2002—the same year, incidentally, that the Liberals assumed office.

Mr. Speaker, I have concerns regarding the Liberal failings to tackle the issue of waste diversion in the IC&I sectors. In fact, there are many more that go back for more than a decade. For example, a special report commissioned by Willms and Shier Environmental Lawyers found that of the staggering 7.6 million tonnes of waste being generated by these industries in 2004, 81% ended up in landfills. The same report found that with the release of the government's discussion paper Ontario's 60% Waste Diversion Goal, in 2004, the province's proposed 60% diversion target for municipal solid waste—including IC&I waste—by the end of 2008 would remain unattainable without specifically tackling the IC&I component.

In 2012, the Auditor General's annual report found that the IC&I sector generated approximately 60% of waste in Ontario, but managed to divert only about 12% of its waste. That, Speaker, is a dramatic Liberal failure.

Even the Liberals have recognized their own failings in regard to IC&I. In their own Draft Strategy for a Waste Free Ontario, on page 23, they even admit that they can't get it right. They state:

"Existing regulatory requirements have not driven diversion, as the 3Rs regulations are limited in scope and require 'reasonable efforts' to send source-separated wastes for recycling or reuse.

"There is potential for greater diversion in the IC&I sectors."

If the application of these regulations has failed, it is only because this government has failed to properly reinforce and monitor them.

Speaking of failure, let's recount just how much the current government has failed on waste diversion. The

Liberals came into power with a waste diversion rate of around 25%. Then they promised, in 2004, that they would increase diversion to 60% by 2008. Well, Speaker, it's now 2016 and I can report to this House that Ontario's diversion rate is nowhere near 60%. In fact, 12 years after the Liberals promised to increase recycling, Ontario's waste diversion remains stagnant at just 25%.

Speaker, we just can't trust this government to get anything right.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They can't get anything right.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: They can't. That's right. You know what? That 25% is 35% below the Liberals' target. So what happened to their promise? What happened?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Same as always: They break their promise.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: That's true, and they make a lot of empty promises, as well.

I can tell you that in this stretch goal that they had, they did absolutely nothing to address the largest sources of waste in this province. Instead, they spent their time creating recycling cartels to impose eco taxes on Ontario consumers. These eco tax programs have unfairly increased costs for Ontarians while failing to make any meaningful change in the province's overall diversion rate.

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Speaker, while this government has failed to make any meaningful change, hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent to finance Liberals' recycling cartels, including Ontario Electronic Stewardship and Ontario Tire Stewardship. Clearly, we need reform.

That's why, in 2012, our party brought forward a bold new plan to increase waste diversion. We saw the economic potential of the recycling industry. We in the PC Party knew that with the right regulatory system, businesses would invest in recovering old tires, plastics and metals that could be recycled into new products and marketed to consumers across the country and around the world. But to unleash this potential, we have to get government out of the way. Sadly, this just isn't happening.

Going back to our plan: We would take steps. We announced that we would eliminate each and every Liberal eco tax program. We would scrap the Liberals' recycling cartels. We would abolish the Liberals' eco tax agency, known as Waste Diversion Ontario, and we would return the government to its true role as a tough regulator. These policy changes would be the first step towards a competitive marketplace.

To create the conditions for this marketplace, we would then have government set measurements and achievable recycling targets for businesses, establish environmental standards and enforce the rules. That's it. That is what government should be doing.

Again, I'm going to repeat this, because just maybe the government might adopt these ideas: To create the proper conditions for an effective recycling, recovering circular economy, we should have a government that sets measurable and achievable recycling targets for busi-

nesses, establishes environmental standards and enforces the rules. And then just stay out of the way.

It would then be the responsibility of businesses, with a competitive marketplace, to find the most effective, efficient and productive way to increase recycling. Some businesses would choose to work on their own; others would choose to work within a collaborative effort to achieve economies of scale. But under our plan, both approaches would work, because government and Waste Diversion Ontario would no longer be in the business of telling industry how to run its operations. If they were to look internally, they should know first and foremost that based on their record, they should not be telling anybody how to run an operation.

Speaker, it was clear the last time the Legislature debated the issue of waste diversion that the Liberals did not agree with our plan. In fact, the Liberal government tabled Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, which inspired such overwhelming opposition that it met with a quick and welcome demise.

Now, as I said earlier in my speech, I am pleasantly surprised to see that the Liberals have in large part adopted the PC vision for an open recycling marketplace. But we still have major concerns with Bill 151 that must be addressed in committee. I want to generally outline our concerns, and then go over the bill in detail to explain the specific problems.

Generally, we believe the following changes must be made to improve the bill: First, establish a clear, legislated timeline to eliminate every single Liberal eco tax program—we stand firmly on that. Secondly, scrap the Liberals' eco tax agency, Waste Diversion Ontario—don't just meld it or massage it into a new authority; it needs to be gone. And thirdly, drop all plans to create a force of waste cops. Yes, we are looking—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, folks, on the government side there isn't one person who isn't talking to another person. Isn't that amazing? I would suggest that if you want to have all these discussions, please take them outside, because it's getting very loud. Thanks so much.

Continue.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And because we have such good ideas, I think I'm going to revisit the changes that we're going to recommend to Bill 151. They can take them back to their minister and to their Premier, because they're good ideas.

To improve the bill, we would establish a clear, legislated timeline to eliminate every single Liberal eco tax program. Second, we would scrap the Liberals' eco tax agency, known as Waste Diversion Ontario, not massage it into a new bureaucratic body or authority. Thirdly, we would drop all plans to create a force of waste cops to police recycling bins and garbage cans across the province. Speaker, can you believe it? Their idea of creating jobs in Ontario is creating yet another layer of bureaucracy to police recycling bins and garbage cans—not acceptable. Fourthly, we would cut red tape that

increases costs for Ontarians and impedes environmental protection in our province. If these changes are made, we can stop many of the unintended consequences that the government has failed to see with this proposed legislation.

Now I would like to address the Liberals' eco tax programs. While other provinces advance waste diversion and grow the green economy, Ontario, as I mentioned before, has lagged behind, largely because the Liberals have protected their eco tax programs and recycling cartels out of fear of confronting failure. It's not hard to see why. The Liberals' reaction is a natural tendency of how central planners manage cartels or monopolies. As the Nobel Prize-winning economist Friedrich Hayek pointed out more than 70 years ago, monopoly "is attained through collusive agreement and promoted by public policies." The trouble with this system, as Hayek explains, is that "Where the power which ought to check and control monopoly becomes interested in sheltering and defending its appointees, where for the government to remedy an abuse is to admit responsibility for it, and where criticism of the actions of monopoly means criticism of the government, there is little hope of monopoly becoming the servant of the community."

The good news, Hayek says, is that when monopolistic agreements are invalidated and when these policies are reversed, competitive conditions can finally be restored. With competition, businesses and consumers have more freedom, and our economy can create more jobs and growth.

So, Speaker, you might be saying, "How do we get to a more competitive recycling marketplace in Ontario?" I have the answer for that, and I'm sure you're waiting for it.

Mr. Grant Crack: No. Share it. Share it.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Okay, the member from the Prescott area wants to hear. I will gladly share with you.

The first step must be scrapping eco tax programs and cartels. Our party has consistently and clearly made this point for years, yet the Liberal government has always opted to protect the status quo. However, the new environment minister seems to be changing the Liberals' tune, claiming the government will now meet the PC demand of scrapping eco tax programs. We heard a couple of different timelines or time frames earlier this morning.

We welcome this development, but, as always, we know the devil is in the details, especially with this government. Unfortunately, section 14 of schedule 2 makes it optional for the government to phase out or wind up its eco tax programs, so we can't trust it. This is a major concern because, as before, in case after case, time after time, we just can't trust the Liberal government's word. After all, this is the same government that promised to reach 60% waste diversion, yet it has left the rate stalled at 25%. That is why we need assurances that the government will actually follow through with its new-found commitment to scrap its failed programs and its cartels.

The Ontario PCs are calling for a clear, legislated timeline to eliminate the Used Tires Program, the waste electrical and electronic equipment program and the Orange Drop Program. Producers of the materials in these programs should then be individually responsible for meeting recycling targets and standards while having the freedom to meet these obligations as they see fit. This is a fair, reasonable proposal that protects Ontario consumers and taxpayers. Without the government agreeing to this proposal, Ontarians rightly have no reason to believe the Liberals at all.

Next, I'd like to speak about the blue box. The Blue Box Program is one of Ontario's major environmental achievements—no two ways about it. For more than three decades, it has played a critical role in recovering paper and packaging so that they could be recycled into new products. A large part of this program's success is the result of the Waste Diversion Act, which was introduced by the former PC government under Mike Harris. The Harris government passed this act in 2002 to create a more stable funding formula for the Blue Box Program. Rather than just having municipalities foot the bill, the new formula divided the costs between industry and municipalities 50-50.

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The Harris government's intent was to ensure that the blue box would remain financially sustainable well into the future. It used a bold new principle for reform, called extended producer responsibility. It was the first acknowledgement that producers needed to take responsibility for managing the waste that was created from their products and packaging. Despite some initial uncertainty, the Harris government moved forward with its EPR reforms while closely working with industry and municipalities to build on the growing success of the Blue Box Program.

Looking back on this achievement, it's truly rewarding to see how far Ontario has come in this particular area. Today, 95% of Ontarians have curbside recycling, and the blue box has achieved a diversion rate of more than 67%. This accomplishment is the result of the vision and the leadership of the former PC government and the hard work and dedication of industry, as well as our municipal partners.

Unfortunately, the program has begun to face major challenges under the current Liberal government. This government has allowed Waste Diversion Ontario to pit industry and municipalities against each other in a bitter battle over services and costs. Each year, disputes over funding leave uncertainty for the next. Both sides have called on the government for a solution for years, but their pleas have fallen on deaf ears. Instead of developing a solution in 2013, do you know what the Liberals did? They tabled Bill 91. If you can believe it, this failed bill actually would have legislated a role for the WDO to perpetuate the battle between municipalities and industry by giving it new powers over funding. With such fatal flaws, it's not hard to see why Bill 91 was rejected by Ontarians, rejected by industry and left to die on the

order paper. We all know why it died on the order paper, don't we? Prorogation, a resignation—the list could go on and on.

Thankfully, though, there is a solution for the blue box, and it's what our party actually proposed. The PC plan is to transition the blue box into an industry-led funded program. We acknowledge the good work done by our municipal partners on recycling, but we know that to ensure financial stability into the future, industry must take on full responsibility for the program. This reform would reduce costs for consumers, protect municipal taxpayers and streamline decision-making to increase efficiency. We are glad to see that government has come around to our way of thinking on the blue box, but we remain concerned about how it plans to execute the program's transition. The blue box transition has to be done gradually and carefully.

Speaker, we have seen the frantic pace that this government is moving at to impose its new cap-and-trade scheme in time for its budget. We have called on the Liberals repeatedly to slow down. It's interesting. I think they finally got the message on ORPP and they've definitely slowed down on that. When they don't have a plan, they don't have a fully costed business model, maybe, just perhaps, we can hold out hope that by next week, the Liberals will have slowed down on their cap-and-trade scheme as well.

You know what? Taxpayers, industry and our economy are going to suffer for years as a result of the reign of this particular Liberal government, so it greatly concerns us to think the Liberals may use the same approach with the blue box. This program is too important to hinder with sloppy regulatory work and rushed decision-making. Quite frankly, Ontarians deserve to have no disruptions to their blue box service.

Ontarians have done their part to make the Blue Box Program a success, so the government must commit to do its part as well. To protect the blue box, we would like to see a guarantee that the Liberals will not raise the funding cap for industry without a credible plan in place. This guarantee needs to be clearly spelled out to protect Ontario consumers and taxpayers.

Next, I would like to address the Liberals' plan to give Waste Diversion Ontario new powers and a new name, the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority. The sections dealing with the authority in Bill 151 show that the Liberals have not fully given up on their central planning approach. They've been dragged, kicking and screaming, into accepting the common-sense proposals put forward by the Ontario PCs, but they continue to hold on to some of the worst aspects of the current system and their failed Bill 91.

First of all, it's their consistent and tireless defence of WDO which all Ontarians should consider suspect. WDO is the organization that surprised farmers across Ontario—and I heard about it in my riding of Huron-Bruce—with a 2,200% increase on farm tire taxes. It rubber-stamped \$40 eco taxes on TVs, and it failed to oversee the reckless spending of the tire tax dollars at

Ontario Tire Stewardship, where Ontarians' money was blown on lavish stays at luxurious hotels and fancy dinners of elk tenderloin, wild boar chops and fancy drinks as well. In short, WDO is the problem.

Ontarians need to ask why the Liberals continue to hold up this failed agency as the solution. And why on earth do they think WDO should be rewarded with new powers after years of incompetence? As always, the Liberals' approach does not make any sense.

To quote my colleague the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, if you have an employee who fails to meet his obligations, you don't give him a raise and hand him a promotion; you give him a pink slip and show him the door. That's what needs to happen here, Speaker. It's time for this government to finally realize that it can't keep rewarding bad behaviour, and it's time to put this toothless watchdog out of its misery.

Our position remains clear. To bring about the change Ontario's recycling market needs, we would scrap Waste Diversion Ontario, return the environment ministry to its role as a regulator, leave enforcement to the ministry's enforcement branch, and maintain a limited agency that only collects and analyzes data—that means no policy development, no dictating and no enforcement. These changes would greatly improve oversight, strengthen enforcement and contain costs for businesses and consumers alike.

Unfortunately, it appears as though in this area the Liberals are doomed to repeat the same old mistakes. Not only does WDO get to continue under Bill 151 with massive new powers, it gets an unlimited budget. This government just won't learn from their past mistakes.

Yes, Speaker, you did hear it right: WDO will have an unlimited budget. Ontarians cannot afford that. The

Liberals have not produced one estimate of how much WDO will cost Ontarians. Sound familiar? It's like the cap-and-trade scheme that they're trying to ram down our throats as well.

But going back to WDO instead, they say that WDO's new mandate needs to be worked out in regulation. Regulation happens behind closed doors, outside of the democratic arena. So we worry: How much bigger will WDO get? The Liberals really aren't sure. How much more powerful will WDO get? The Liberals won't say. And how much will WDO cost at the end of the day? The Liberals claim to have no idea.

With policies like this, it's really not that difficult to understand why the Liberals have more than doubled the province's debt to \$315 billion. They've doubled the debt, Speaker, to \$315 billion, and unfortunately they have no plan to bring the budget back to balance. They may say they're striving to achieve it, but based on their failed policy, we know that just won't happen. Just like the Liberal government's financial mismanagement, WDO will follow suit.

In fact, when we take a look at budgets, WDO's current budget recently jumped by nearly \$1 million in just one year. Its budget for 2016 is now \$3.2 million, if you can believe it, and \$1.2 million of that is going to professional fees.

Speaker, I look forward to picking this up at my next opportunity. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1759.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

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Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
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Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
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Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
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Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
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Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
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Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
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Vacant	Whitby–Oshawa	

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Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Kathryn McGarry, Norm Miller
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Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 18 February 2016

Jeudi 18 février 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 18 February 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 18 février 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 17, 2016, on the motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy; the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure/Ministry of Research and Innovation; the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs; the Ministry of Finance; the Ministry of Education; and the Office of Francophone Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

M^{me} France G  linas: Thank you, Speaker. It will be a pleasure for me to use the few minutes left on this important debate to put a few things on the record, I would say in no particular order.

One of the first things I wanted to talk about has to do with the Ministry of Health and the fact that we have nurse practitioners throughout this province. I'm really thankful that the Liberals saw fit to fund the nurse-practitioner-led clinics. I have three of them in my riding; there are many of them in the north. But Speaker, did you know that those nurses, most of them women—there are a few men—have had a pay freeze for the last nine years?

Think of where you were nine years ago and think of where you are now. Think of how much you pay for gas, for milk, for groceries, for everything else. Those nurses have not seen a pay increase in nine years. How could it be that we will be voting on these concurrence motions, but yet, in the Ministry of Health, we don't see anything to bring equity to nurse practitioners, we don't see anything to bring equity to the dietitians who work in any primary care model? Whether you look at family health teams, community health centres, aboriginal health access centres, nurse-practitioner-led clinics, it doesn't matter.

The dietitians have not seen a pay increase, and their pay was too low to start out with. The same thing is true for most of the other professionals working within the primary care sector. Whether you look at nurses or health promoters or dietitians or social workers, they haven't seen a pay increase in way too long.

What does that mean? That means they are not able to recruit and retain a stable workforce, because those are

people with pretty good skills. They can choose to go elsewhere with those skills and get jobs that pay a decent wage, have pension plans, have benefits.

The same thing in the Ministry of Health budget: We are looking at the fifth year in a row of flatline budgets for hospitals. Our hospitals are very creative and they have sought out efficiencies and they have developed best practices so they can do more with less. But, as the Ontario Hospital Association will say, they have come to a critical point where most of them are not able to balance their budget.

What does that mean? That means that 1,200 nurses have been laid off. That means that in January alone, 400 nurses were laid off. That means that this week alone, we had 69 layoffs in the Windsor area. We had layoffs yesterday in the London area. That means that our health care system—our hospital system—cannot cope. I hear the Minister of Health say, "Oh, but there are positions advertised in Ottawa." Mr. Speaker, nurses are not widgets. A nurse who loses a full-time job working at the hospital in Windsor cannot take unscheduled, part-time work in Ottawa. Those people have lives just like you and I. This is not respectful, and it's hurtful to patient care. But this is what we're about to vote on.

All the Liberals will stand up and vote in favour: "This is a great thing." But I can't support things like this, because it's wrong, because we can do better, because when we talk to the people of Ontario they tell us that health care is their number one priority. This is what defines us: We have a health care system that is based on needs, not on ability to pay.

That brings me to my third point: that this government has been pushing privatization at every step of the way. Look at programs and services that used to be within our hospital sector and that have gone out to the community. I have no problem—all of us New Democrats have no problem—with strong, community-based, not-for-profit health services. I come from that system; I certainly support it. But that's not what we're seeing. That's not at all what we're seeing.

What we are seeing are programs and services like mammography, like physiotherapy, like colonoscopy, like many diagnostic tests that used to be done in hospital. They were done in an area in hospitals that are not-for-profit, hospitals that have layers of oversight, transparency and accountability to make sure that we can ensure quality. As hospitals cannot maintain balanced budgets, they are told, "You can get rid of anything that is not acute hospital care. Hospitals should focus on acute hospital care."

Well, this is all fine and dandy, but where do the rest of the programs and systems go? The other programs and services go to the private sector. They go to the private sector where there is a very, very thin layer of oversight, called CPSO, which looks after the physicians who work in those private clinics. For the rest of it, we have lost all the transparency, the accountability, the quality assurance that we were going to have—good, quality care. All of this is gone because we have not built up the same amount of scrutiny that exists in our hospitals. Those services are allowed to transfer into the community, but not the oversight, not the transparency, not the accountability. None of that transfers, plus you bring in profit.

What does it mean when you bring in profit? It means that services that used to be completely accessible—your physician or your nurse practitioner would refer you for a colonoscopy. It was straightforward. You got your little paper that said, “Show up at 8:30, don’t eat anything,” and that was it. There’s none of that anymore, because you’re sent to a private clinic. Did you know, Speaker, that ColonCancerCheck, one of the programs I am really proud of that we have in Ontario—Cancer Care Ontario has this program so we can prevent colon cancer; we can catch it early for the best result. Well, most of that work is done by the private sector.

And what does it mean when you deal with the private sector? Well, you don’t simply have your appointment anymore. Now when you get there, they say, “Oh, you need to have a conversation with the dietitian.” Remember those dietitians who used to work in the not-for-profit? Well, they’re now going to the for-profits, where they get paid a little bit better. But the dietitian is not free; the consultation will be 60 bucks. “Well, I didn’t think I had to pay, but if the doctor there says I need to talk to a dietitian, I must need to talk to a dietitian; therefore, I will pay.” Then the barriers to access start.

0910

The Ontario Health Coalition did a fantastic report. They went out to hundreds of those clinics that have popped up throughout Ontario—not so much in the north, but a whole bunch of them here in southern Ontario—and they looked, and 90% of them or more had fees like, “We will do your cataract surgery, but the ophthalmologist prefers to use this lens, and this is a lens that is not covered; therefore, you’ll have to pay \$300 per eye.”

“Well, I thought my cataract surgery was supposed to be free. I thought we had medicare.” Yes, but all of a sudden there’s always a way they find to basically put in barriers to access to care.

I cannot vote in favour of a document that is basically pushing barriers to care—this is what we New Democrats call them—because once there are those backdoor fees imposed on patients, it means that some of us won’t go. It means that some will think twice about getting the care that is required—the care that is based on needs—because they do not have the ability to pay. This goes completely against medicare.

When the Liberals stand up, they are pro-medicare: “This is the program that defines us,” and they have

nothing but good words. But when it comes to acting, their actions are completely opposite to what they say. All of their actions are pushing more and more health programs and services into the for-profit sector, which they have completely refused to regulate or put oversight on or make sure they are respectful of what medicare is all about. So they talk a good talk, Speaker, but their actions speak even louder. Their actions speak louder when we see what is being done; when we see the number of private, for-profit clinics that are popping up every single week in this province; when we see the erosion of our hospitals, cut by cut—death by a thousand cuts. I cannot stand for that, Speaker, because this is wrong.

That brings me to another topic that has been in the news a lot, and that is violence: violence in our long-term-care homes—we’re talking patient-on-patient violence—and violence against our health providers, most of them being women and most of them being nurses.

A nurse had the courage to go against the taboos of the profession and speak up and give clear examples of how she and the nurses she worked with had been victims of violence, some of it pretty drastic. We’re talking about broken bones, physical violence, mental—every level. She had the guts to speak out, and what happened to her? She got fired. She got fired from her job. Her union is now working really hard to get her job back.

Do you know what happens when something like this happens? It puts a cold blanket on everybody else. A lot of nurses were finally coming out of their shell, being able to say: “Yes, my workplace has a lot of violence that could be prevented. Yes, I live with a lot of violence at work; I am afraid.” And yet the surroundings do not do anything to protect them, and when one of them finally speaks out, she is fired. She is now unemployed. How is this supposed to motivate change in the right direction?

Make no mistake, Speaker: As soon as we start to look into this, what is the main reason we have violence? It’s because we don’t have enough hands-on staff. It’s as simple as this. When people are sick, when they are in pain and they are made to wait a long, long time, then when that good nurse comes to help them, sometimes they lash out and she is at the receiving end. It doesn’t matter how qualified and good and good-hearted and wanting to help—when she has a caseload that makes no sense, when she’s running from one patient to the next because there’s not enough of them to do the work, then they pay the price.

When they speak up about paying the price and being the victim of violence, they end up losing their job. I can’t stand for things like this. This is wrong at so, so many levels that I could never vote for something that would allow this to go forward.

You all know that I come from 25 years in the health care system; many, many of my friends are nurses. They are primary care providers, hospital workers. They speak to me. Something interesting: The CBC radio station in Sudbury wanted to do a story on this. When I talk to some of the people I’ve worked with, some of the nurses who are victims of violence, and ask them to go public,

ask them to answer the call from the radio station, they all shy away. They don't want to; they are afraid. This is revictimizing them and this is so wrong.

My colleague here has lots of experience in trying to get those nurses their jobs back. Believe me, it is not easy and it is not a certain thing either, and sometimes you win and sometimes you lose. The consequences are drastic. Think of it: You've lost your job, you've been fired. This is wrong.

I also wanted to talk about—my, the time went by fast—both OPP helicopters. We used to have one in Sudbury; both of them are in Orillia. We needed the OPP helicopter in Sagamok this week because we had an armed, dangerous situation. Orillia could not take off because there was a snowstorm. Both OPP helicopters were stuck there. They ended up using the MNR helicopter from Sudbury to do search and rescue, but MNR is not trained to do search and rescue, the OPP is.

I can't vote for this, Speaker. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? Further debate? Last call for further debate.

Mr. Leal has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Leal has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr. Leal has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure/Ministry of Research and Innovation. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr. Leal has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr. Leal has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance, including supplementaries. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr. Leal has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Education. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr. Leal has moved concurrence in supply for the Office of Francophone Affairs. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motions agreed to.

0920

SUPPORTING ONTARIO'S TRAILS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE SOUTIEN AUX SENTIERS DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Coteau moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to enact the Ontario Trails Act, 2016 and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 100, Loi édictant la Loi de 2016 sur les sentiers de l'Ontario et modifiant diverses lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I recognize the Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing some of my time with the parliamentary assistant, the member from Kingston and the Islands.

Before I start, I wanted to take a minute to recognize the extraordinary work of one of my former fellow trustees, Sheila Ward, who passed away yesterday. Sheila Ward was one of my mentors when I first got to the board, back in 2003. She was an incredible person, very intelligent, smart, understood the process of the school board and how provincial governments and federal governments work so well, and she was a strong advocate for the children of Toronto. I know she's going to be missed by many people in this Legislature, but also in the city of Toronto. She was an extraordinary person and I just want to thank her, her partner and her family for the time she invested in public education in this city. I think she was originally elected back in 1991. She was just an extraordinary person and she will be missed by many of us.

The last 12 months have been an extraordinary year for sport here in the province of Ontario, and I'm happy to be here today to talk about this new act. Joining us this morning are some of the strongest advocates for trails here in the province of Ontario and across the country, folks who support trails and healthy living. I just want to mention these folks here joining us in the east members' gallery today: Richard Wyma, Mike Clewer, Bill Allen, Larry Ketcheson, Peter Curtis, Patrick Connor, Jack de Wit, Jessica Maga, Robert Ramsay and Brian Knechtel. They represent organizations such as Conservation Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, Parks and Recreation Ontario, parks and recreation Canada, the Trans Canada Trail, the National Trails Coalition and the Ontario Federation of Trail Riders. I hope I didn't miss anyone. Thank you so much for joining us here today.

I also see the MPP for Durham in the members' gallery as well. Good morning.

Mr. Speaker, like I said, this year has been an extraordinary year for sport here in the province of Ontario. The ministry staff and the government have been working hard to advance sport here in the province of Ontario. I want to recognize the staff at the ministry of sport, but also tourism and culture and the entire ministry for their extraordinary work.

In the past year, we developed the first sports plan in 20 years. We developed that sports plan because we wanted to address some of the most complex issues that are taking place here in sport in Ontario, and I'm very proud of our Game ON report. It addresses issues like low participation rates among women and girls in sport and looks at ways to overcome financial barriers that are put in place that sometimes prevent young people from full participation and from reaching their full potential in sport.

We've more than doubled the amount of Community Aboriginal Recreation Activator Programs that serve communities across the province of Ontario. These programs encourage young people to participate in sport and recreation through community-run programs.

As every member in this House is aware, we had the largest, most successful sporting event in the history of the province and Canada, and we were proud to be able to deliver that on time and on budget.

Mr. Speaker, our ambitious agenda to advance sport in the province of Ontario is far from over. As part of our plan to move sport and active lifestyles forward here in Ontario, I have the privilege of standing before this House to speak further to our proposed new legislation, the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, 2015. This is an important piece of legislation and I'm so happy that the parliamentary assistant will be joining me to speak on this bill. She has played such an active role in developing this proposed legislation. In my speech I'll address some of the ways that the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act will improve access to Ontario trails, building both a healthier and more prosperous Ontario. I know that the member from Kingston and the Islands will go deeper into some more of the details and talk about the next steps for creating a culture of wellness and active living in Ontario.

Ontario's trail system has always played an important role in building a healthier and more prosperous Ontario. That's why increasing access to Ontario trails is so important. If passed, the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act would increase user access by making it simpler for trail users to understand the types of trail experiences that exist here in the province; cultivate trail tourism in the province by clarifying liability responsibility; and encourage the further expansions of our trail network by protecting landowners.

Currently, there is no single method of trail user plans that allow people to understand the trail experiences that exist here in the province. That means that there's no one-stop method to search for specific trails, and there isn't a systematic method of understanding how difficult trails can possibly be. So if you're a cyclist and you want to get out there and hit a trail, it's really difficult to understand, in many cases, the difficulty level of that trail. So you say, "I'm going to go for a great workout today." You're in an area you've never been to before and you hit a trail; it could end up being just flat land versus the more ambitious trail that you wanted to take on. An ATV rider might want a challenge and end up with a straightforward trail. It's unlike our ski hills that exist in Ontario and across the country, where when you go to a ski hill you understand right away the difficulty level of that ski trail.

Our Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, if passed, would create a voluntary categorization system and would provide users with a more holistic perspective of the Ontario trails network. If passed, Bill 100 would assist users in curating their own trail experiences, increasing access to trails and their general use.

One of the key pieces to this legislation is increasing the number of trail users by adding clarity to the Occupiers' Liability Act. That's an important piece that we think needs to be put in place here in Ontario. We know that trail tourism in the province of Ontario is part of a

larger tourism sector in the province, which is a \$28-billion sector. That represents around 4% of our GDP in the province of Ontario. We know that tourism supports 350,000 jobs in the province of Ontario. I may add that of the youth jobs that are out there in Ontario, 40% are connected to the tourism sector, so it helps our young people here in Ontario. The trail tourism component of that larger \$28-billion sector represents about \$1.4 billion in economic benefits, and supports an impressive 18,000 jobs. As the minister responsible for tourism in the province, I can tell you that this bill, if passed, will also continue to build on tourism in the province.

Currently there exists some legal ambiguity around what standard of care is owed to the users of trails. For example, if an ATV club charges membership fees for coordinating rides on a portion of an Ontario trail network, it is legally questionable what level of care is required from the business and from the owner of the trail. If Bill 100 is passed, it will clarify legislation, encouraging further participation between businesses and the owners of trails.

I would also like to highlight how we're also increasing access to trails by protecting landowners. Currently, if a hiker trespasses and causes significant damage to property, the landowner would have to file two court claims. If passed, Bill 100 would streamline that process by which a landowner can reclaim damages caused to their property, turning two lengthy trials into one.

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Mr. Speaker, our government anticipates that making it easier for property owners to recoup damages will increase the number of property owners willing to allow easements on their property. Many trails cross private lands, with access freely given by these people willing to share their properties with trail users.

I just want to take a moment to thank all of the Ontario landowners out there who freely provide access to their land for trails, because it does, again, add to our economic activity here in the province of Ontario, but even more importantly, it adds to building a healthy Ontario. This legislation acknowledges the role private landowners have played in developing Ontario's trails and, if passed, will ensure that these property owners are protected against damage. It's important to increase access, because we want people in Ontario to be able to participate in an active lifestyle, and we want to promote a culture of wellness.

Trails are around us. In fact, just outside of the Legislature here, there's a trail. There are trails everywhere you go.

I often like to use the trail in Gananoque along the Thousand Islands Parkway when I go to visit my in-laws. It's the trail I often use. It's such a beautiful walk out there.

There are so many people participating on those trails. I was asking this morning about some of the trails that are out there that are notable. I know that around Lake Superior there's a trail where you can go and see, if you go along the trail, where the Group of Seven painted and actually go from point to point.

So we know that not only are trails good for one's health, but they also allow us to experience and see things that we may not normally have access to.

Mr. Speaker, we know that this healthy lifestyle component of trails helps prevent heart disease, diabetes, obesity, colon cancer and depression. Getting out there and being in nature is good for one's health. In fact, there was a study from Queen's back in 2001 that stated that trails can also reduce the economic burden of physical inactivity. We also know from our own research at the ministry back in 2014 that 90% of trail users believe that trails have a positive impact on their physical and mental health. Trails are vital to the people of Ontario. It's probably one of the most inexpensive activities you can do out there. You just walk outside and you hit a trail and you go.

This morning, I was talking to my friend Nick Pessos, someone I grew up with, and I was telling him what I was doing this morning. He asked, "Can a trail be a pathway?" I said yes. They're along boardwalks, pathways; they could be through waterways, along rivers, along the lake; they could be through city centres. Trails are everywhere. We want to make sure those trails are mapped out, that they're placed into categories, and people can easily choose which type of route they want to engage in, to learn, to stay healthy and just to explore.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke a bit about the \$1.4 billion of economic activity that trails create for the province of Ontario. In 2014, hiking expenditures by Ontarians led to important benefits to the province. There was \$559 million directly put back into Ontario's GDP through hiking, and \$806 million through labour income. The ministry also has done research and we have identified an estimated 18,000 jobs that are directly connected. The spending that takes place when people are actually on the trails: \$957 million on day-outing hiking expenditures, including travel, and almost \$700 million for overnight-outing hiking expenditures that take place here in the province.

Because trails build a healthier and more prosperous Ontario, the Premier has included this trail legislation in my mandate letter, and that's why we're looking forward to the future debate on the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act. We see this as an important piece of building a strong Ontario.

Since 2009, our government has invested \$130 million in both direct and indirect funding to support our trails system here in the province of Ontario. We've invested in the Pan and Parapan Am Games legacy investments that, among other things, filled gaps on the Trans Canada Trail, creating 2,000 kilometres of continuous trail here in Ontario, connecting communities from Ottawa to Windsor and Fort Erie to Huntsville.

We're investing in the restoration of the iconic Ontario Place, creating the William G. Davis Trail, a dedicated waterfront trail along the east island of Ontario Place announced last year by Premier Wynne, which recognizes the extraordinary work of one of our greatest Premiers here in the province of Ontario, William G. Davis.

Mr. Chris Ballard: A Progressive Conservative.

Hon. Michael Coteau: A Progressive Conservative.

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, there's a bit of activity around me right now.

We all recognize the extraordinary work of former Premier Bill Davis. I think this trail and the dedication at Ontario Place of this trail to this great Ontarian, this great Canadian, is an incredible thing.

I'd like to conclude by saying that the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act will improve access to Ontario's trails, building both a healthier and more prosperous Ontario. Our trails system in Ontario was largely built by the hard work and time of our volunteers—many of them joining us today on this important day—members of trail clubs and other not-for-profit organizations.

I was surprised when I was first briefed on the trail system here in Ontario and they told me how many clubs look after trails in the province of Ontario. I think it was 900 and change—just under 1,000 clubs across—am I getting some heads over there? Is that rough? Okay. So about 1,000 clubs here in the province of Ontario, and these are volunteers who look after our trails across the province on their own time so people in Ontario can stay healthier and so we can continue to add to the economy through trails. I want to say thank you to the men and women and the young people who work on those trails every day to ensure we have safe access and information, and we're allowed to participate in such an incredible activity.

In the fall of 2013, the ministry held a consultation; they put forward a consultation process to look for ways to strengthen the Ontario Trails Strategy. Through the consultations, we looked at issues related to trails: the roadblocks that exist, and the challenges and the opportunities presented to trails and organizations across the province. We spoke to people from Thunder Bay, people in Toronto, and Ingersoll to Ottawa. We turned to trail users, providers, municipalities, landowners and, of course, to our aboriginal partners. We held five regional sessions and two sessions with aboriginal communities. We also posted a discussion paper on the Environmental Registry for 48 days.

Through this consultation, we heard about the issues directly from the people involved in nurturing our trail system. We heard about the concerns related to liability, securing land for trails, trespassing, protecting private and public property, and more. But we also heard about opportunities to enhance our trails system here in Ontario to enhance trail tourism, to strengthen the role of trails, to look for ways to maximize water trails opportunities, ways to conduct research etc. Over 250 individuals and organizations participated in the consultations, and we received 80 submissions via the Environmental Registry on this discussion paper.

The bill before this House is informed by knowledgeable and valuable experience and perspectives shared by the entire sector. The legislation was developed in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources and

Forestry and the Attorney General. If passed, it will help us better manage trail activities and protect public lands and property by modernizing stewardship, compliance and enforcement tools.

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If passed, our legislation would recognize the significance of our world-class trail system, and would protect and enhance it as a vital resource for Ontarians long into the future. When this government introduced this bill back in May 2015, it was greeted with tremendous support from the trail community, associated stakeholders and the public. I call upon members of this House to show their support for Bill 100 and for the continued sustainability of Ontario's trail system, truly one of our greatest treasures here in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I recognize the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It truly is a tremendous pleasure to share time today with my colleague the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. We've got a lot of details to go through, so I'm going to try and plow through fairly quickly, so bear with me.

I'm delighted to be able to add my support to this bill. I want to speak in a little more detail about the positive implications if this bill is passed. Ontario has some of the most treasured and protected outdoor areas in the world. As the minister has stated, the proposed Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, 2015, is important for Ontario and the future of our province's natural and cultural heritage. Thousands of kilometres of trails and roads on provincial crown land are open for the public, as the minister has stated, to use free of charge. Our urban, suburban, rural and remote land and water trails allow millions of Ontarians and visitors access to unforgettable natural experiences. There is a trail for everyone, people of all abilities and all ages.

In my community of Kingston and the Islands, we are so fortunate to have a number of trails that represent our rich heritage and our conservation efforts. Winter, spring, summer or fall, regardless of the season, I always enjoy hiking along Kingston trails; if only I had more time to do it. The city of Kingston is home to approximately 140 kilometres of walking, hiking and biking trails, divided among six distinct trail systems, all with unique character and charm. The Downtown Kingston, Treasure Island, Kingston West and Fort Henry trails are all part of the Waterfront Trail, a 900-kilometre Rideau Trail that stretches from Kingston all the way to Ottawa.

Last year, as part of the city of Kingston's annual Kingston Gets Active Month, I invited members of our community to join with me for lunchtime walks around our beautiful downtown and at Lemoine Point for a few early and invigorating Saturday morning hikes. One of our most well-known trails is the K&P Trail. Dating back to the 1800s, the K&P Trail, formerly the Kingston and Pembroke railway right-of-way, served as a railway track for steam engines. Once the tracks were removed, the right-of-way became a popular trail for recreational use. Now owned by the city of Kingston, the trail will be an important connector to the eastern Ontario trail network.

The K&P Trail is a great example of a multi-part trail. It has 15 kilometres of multi-use, semi-urban and rural trail extended from the Cataraqui Creek to Orser Road. The K&P is ideal for a variety of recreational uses, enjoyed in all seasons, and it provides for a range of scenic experiences with its open landscape, rock cuts and wetlands. A personal favourite of mine is the 11 kilometres of trails at the Lemoine Point Conservation Area, with several scenic lookouts and benches located along the trails that enable you to take in all of the peaceful surroundings and all that Mother Nature has to offer. That it is equipped with handicapped-accessible trails from the north and south parking lots makes this a very popular trail for people with disabilities.

Our trails province-wide provide the opportunity to lead a healthier and more active lifestyle. The province recently conducted the Ontario Trail User Survey, which received over 5,000 responses from a wide range of trail users from across the province, including hikers, snowmobilers, mountain bikers, off-road motorcyclists, cyclists, four-by-four users, ATVers, horseback riders, snowshoers, cross-country skiers, canoeists and kayakers. We have left nobody behind. The survey found significant personal benefits with respondents all indicating the use of trails improved their mental health, physical health and sense of well-being.

Trails attract individuals and families to visit and explore our communities, supporting the local economy and jobs. In 2014, hiking expenditures by Ontarians contributed, as the minister has stated, \$559 million to Ontario's GDP and \$806 million in labour income. The ministry's research estimates that hiking created more than 18,000 jobs across the Ontario economy.

Our government has proudly supported the development of our trail networks and I want to take a moment to briefly outline some of our work to date. Since 2005, we have established the Ontario Trails Coordinating Committee to oversee the implementation of the Ontario Trails Strategy. We've mapped over 21,000 kilometres of trails across Ontario and approximately 4,000 trailheads. We've funded a variety of local and regional trail projects, we've improved accessibility for people with disabilities and we've developed an award-winning central website for trails. The proposed legislation, if passed, will build on these achievements, close existing gaps and better support and enhance Ontario's trails.

Beginning with province-wide consultations in 2013, which, as the minister has stated, have included aboriginal engagement sessions and five regional sessions across the province, we heard the concerns and priorities of our different trail partners. Sessions were attended by 251 individuals, which included representatives from 80 municipalities, 48 trail organizations, 42 other not-for-profit organizations, 17 health organizations, 12 tourism organizations and eight conservation authorities, among many others. We also received 80 submissions through the Environmental Registry.

Landowners shared that they are hesitant to allow access for trail development due to liability concerns and

that lawsuits are settled out of court due to fear of liability. Consequently, a clarification is needed for the Occupiers' Liability Act.

Public and private landowners, including the agricultural community, want to ensure that their property is adequately protected and are concerned with property damage from inappropriate trail or off-trail use.

Stakeholders expressed concerns about trespassing. It can be widespread, and measures to counter it can be difficult to enforce. The fines and amount recoverable for damages at the time of prosecution are also low. As a result, changes to the Trespass to Property Act also need to be taken.

There is a need to establish a way to secure land and ensure long-term access to trails, where costly rerouting of trails can be avoided. A legislative mechanism is needed to help secure land long term for trails and trail access to allow for trail easements. We heard that additional tools are needed to help promote trails and trails tourism.

The proposal before you today has been designed to address these issues in a comprehensive way and it has been developed in collaboration with 12 other ministries. It is important to mention that the legislation starts off by acknowledging the crown's duty to respect aboriginal and treaty rights within—and without altering—the constitutional and common law framework that protects them.

If passed, the act would help the trails community more effectively develop, operate and promote trails by addressing long-standing land access, liability, trespassing and protection of property challenges. This legislation, if passed, would make Ontario's thousands of kilometres of trails stronger and safer while encouraging the expansion of the province's trails system.

As enabling legislation, it would provide the government with the authority to guide the trails sector on promotional initiatives to increase awareness and regional tourism. These actions would respond to stakeholder requests for a mechanism to promote trails more effectively and ensure consistency across the province without creating an additional burden.

If passed, the proposed legislation would also set out a mechanism for trail easements, embed the Ontario Trails Strategy into the legislation and require its periodic review. Overall, the passage of this legislation would help deliver on the government's commitment to implement "a refreshed Ontario Trails Strategy, including the introduction of trails legislation." This legislation will allow the province to keep pace as a leader in the development, management and promotion of trails in Ontario.

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If passed, the legislation would proclaim an annual trails week in Ontario to coincide with International Trails Day in June, and through consultations allow for the establishment of voluntary best practices, targets and a classification system, as the minister has mentioned, as well as a process for recognizing trails of distinction. It would also require the publication of the name of every trail recognized as an Ontario trail of distinction on a government of Ontario website, along with the trail

classification system and best practices and targets, if established.

The Ontario classification system could be used to promote trails and provide useful, consistent information to Ontarians and visitors, helping them to find the right trail for their skill level and their interests, enhancing their trail experience. A number of factors would be taken into account, such as designating trails according to the level of difficulty, for example, similar to downhill ski hills' black diamond and other designations. Parks Canada and the International Mountain Bicycling Association use this format for their classification system. They could also be classified on the basis of permitted uses—for example, hiking and snowmobiling—or trail settings, such as urban, rural and remote areas. Other factors as well as accessibility and amenities will also be considered.

A process for recognition would be developed for the trail classification system at a later time through consultation with provincial ministries, agencies, and municipalities; aboriginal communities; stakeholders; and others that have an interest in trails. Voluntary best practices could include trail management and signage, and would enable consistency across the province. If widely adopted, voluntary best practices could help promote trails more effectively. If the act is passed, the government would consult with the trail sector at a later date to help guide the development of voluntary best practices.

The legislation recognizing Ontario trails of distinction would include trail awareness and local tourism, responding to the stakeholder request for a mechanism to promote trails more effectively without creating additional burden. This approach would also allow for the wide variety of trails and varying capacity of trail managers to be taken into account. By including this authority in the legislation, it would signal the intentions of government to provide guidance to this sector.

The legislation, if passed, would strengthen the consequences of trespassing on private and agricultural land and will increase the amount that landowners could recover at the time of prosecution for damages caused by trespassers. The legislation would help to clarify landowner responsibilities for trails running through their land and clarify liability for trail providers and users.

The proposed legislation would also provide a mechanism to establish trail easements. One of the long-standing issues is the long-term securing of land for trails, without which trail managers may lose access to the land, or face costly rerouting. Setting out a mechanism for trail easements would help address this issue. Mechanisms currently available include: informal handshake agreements that can end abruptly when the land is sold; common-law easements that require land ownership on the part of the easement holder, but many trail organizations do not own adjacent or nearby land; and conservation and heritage easements where trails only qualify if they serve specific conservation or heritage interests.

If passed, the proposed legislation would create a mechanism to enable eligible bodies and landowners to

voluntarily enter into easements to secure long-term trail access. This aligns with stakeholder requests for a legislative mechanism to allow trail easements.

An easement under the proposed act would be an agreement between a willing landowner and an eligible body that grants the eligible body a right to use their land for trail-related activities. Trail easements would have to be negotiated between the willing landowners and eligible bodies, and be registered on the title to the land.

In order to ensure that the interests of individual property owners balance with the wider interests and objectives of the whole community, trail easements would not be made exempt from the Planning Act and the oversight it provides. The proposed mechanism would specify the purposes for which a trail easement could be granted; require that all trail easements be registered in the appropriate land registry office; allow the term to be specified in months or years, or in perpetuity, to be negotiated by the eligible body and landowner; allow for the assignment or release of the easement; and allow the easement holder to enforce the easement or covenants and the landowner to enforce those covenants.

There has been some confusion in the past couple of weeks about this particular part of the bill. The misinformation is that if an easement is granted, a landowner will lose control of who can access the trails on their property. This is incorrect and this is something I would like to clarify here and now. As I mentioned above, an easement pursuant to Bill 100, if passed, would be a voluntary agreement between a landowner and an eligible body or bodies. No property owner would be compelled to provide an easement unless they agree to do so.

We are proud of what this legislation can accomplish, if passed. It is the product of a collaborative process between the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport and 12 other ministries. Our primary partners in the development of the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, 2015, have been the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Ministry of the Attorney General.

The legislative proposals include changes to the Public Lands Act, the Occupiers' Liability Act, the Trespass to Property Act, as well as complementary amendments to the Motorized Snow Vehicles Act and the Off-Road Vehicles Act.

Under the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, 2015, if passed, our government addresses liability, trespassing and crown land issues.

In support of the stand-alone Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, 2015, the Public Lands Act would be amended to protect public lands and property from damage and to strengthen enforcement under the act. If passed, changes would make damage to crown land property an offence. This provision would have no effect until a regulation is made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to define damage.

If a person is found guilty of causing damage to crown land or property, a court would be able to order the person to rehabilitate the lands and repair any damage to crown land or property, in addition to imposing a fine

under the act. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry would also be able to rehabilitate land or repair damage and recover costs for doing so in court.

Enforcement officers would be provided with new enforcement tools to stop vehicles, inspect documents and arrest persons suspected of or caught violating the act. Proposed amendments, if passed, would increase the maximum penalties for the majority of offences under the act and create a separate penalty structure for individuals and corporations similar to other legislation. Proposed new maximum penalties for individuals are \$15,000 for the first offence, and \$25,000 for the second and subsequent offences. For commercial interests, proposed maximum penalties are \$25,000 for the first-time offence, and \$50,000 for the second and subsequent offences. The amendments would also allow a court to impose an additional fine where there has been monetary benefit from the commission of an offence under the act.

Due to the vast area of crown land in the province, detection of contraventions is often difficult to achieve within the current two-year time limitation period. The act would be amended to increase the length of time within which to lay charges to within two years from the date of discovery of the offence up to a maximum of five years from the date that the offence was committed.

The second complementary initiative proposed in the legislation relates to the Occupiers' Liability Act, which was adopted in 1980. The act currently provides a basic duty of care to anyone who comes on the land but creates a lower duty towards people who come on the land for certain stated purposes and who are deemed to willingly accept the risk of injury. The act currently states that an individual who comes on to a marked trail for recreational purposes, and for free, does so at their own risk.

Amendments, if passed, would clarify the standard of care required by not-for-profit and public owners and managers of trails. It would be clarified that trail managers and not-for-profit organizations that may receive benefits or payments or may charge incidental fees for access to the land, such as parking fees, would not have to make reasonable efforts to ensure that the trails are reasonably safe. Under those circumstances, the individual trail user who comes on the owner's land does so at their own risk. However, the owner still has an obligation to such a person not to injure them intentionally and not to act with reckless disregard for their safety.

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The proposed amendment would clarify that this rule also applies to organizations that receive a public benefit or payment, such as snowmobile clubs. The act would also be amended to add portages to the list of lands to which the lower standard of care applies. The Trespass to Property Act was also adopted in 1980 as a companion to the Occupiers' Liability Act. It clarifies the offence of trespass and sets out the presumptions about when land is private and thus when entry on the land is trespassing. The act provides rules about signage and gives the landowner the right to arrest and to hold trespassers until the police arrive. Many stakeholders, especially farmers

throughout the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and individually, feel that the maximum fine for offenders under the act of \$2,000 is outdated.

I want to thank the member for Dufferin–Caledon, who introduced a private member's bill in an effort to address this issue, and I'm proud that our government is taking it one step further.

Bill 100's proposed amendments to the Trespass to Property Act would, if passed, strengthen the consequences of trespassing on private and agricultural land by increasing the maximum fine from \$2,000 to \$10,000, consistent with other provincial statutes. It would also remove the limit on the amount that landowners can recover as part of the prosecution for damages caused by trespassers. Raising the maximum fine would show that the province takes trespassing seriously and that the fine is meant to be a deterrent but also proportionate to the offence.

In addition to these changes, the Motorized Snow Vehicles Act and the Off-Road Vehicles Act would be amended through the proposed legislation to align with the amendments that would be made under the Occupiers' Liability Act.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, if passed, the legislation we are proposing addresses many long-standing issues, such as securing long-term access to the land, liability, protection of property and trespassing. Trail organizations, municipalities, the provincial government and other organizations, as well as the aboriginal communities, would all benefit. For example, farmers, municipalities and the general public would benefit from the changes to the Trespass to Property Act, organizations would benefit from the ability to create trail easements, and the provincial government would benefit from enhanced compliance and enforcement tools that would improve the management of trails on crown land.

We will work together to ensure that the trails are safe, accessible spaces where Ontarians of all ages and abilities can enjoy being active in Ontario's beautiful outdoor settings.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to my comments in the beginning related to the importance of trails in the lives of Ontarians. I noted the promotion of better physical and mental health, conserving and appreciating the environment, as well as strengthening our people and the communities they live in. Trails also open up a momentary respite from the fast pace of urban life, along with the challenges of daily living.

My dear friend the Anglican bishop of Ontario, Michael Oulton, described these locations as "thin places." I was intrigued by the term. He went on to describe how these spots are places that we come upon in life and words fail to describe the experience. People of faith consider these places to be found where the walls are a bit weaker between heaven and earth, and we catch a glimpse of the divine. I was thankful to Bishop Oulton for capturing and verbalizing that spiritual correlation. I knew he got it, and so did I.

We also chatted about how people are drawn back to these thin places because they have the capacity to

nurture the heart and soul. Life slows down for a bit, and we can pause to appreciate the remarkable gift we have in the land around us and in the people we encounter. That's the power of the thin places as they touch the heart and draw people together. I'm thankful to Bishop Oulton for opening up that experience with me.

Our government is indeed very supportive of this piece of legislation. We would like to protect and expand Ontario's trails system. I call on all members of this House to join us in the effort by passing this bill today. Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sorry; questions and comments.

Mr. Steve Clark: I listened to the minister and the parliamentary assistant. In fact, the parliamentary assistant used words in her last paragraph saying that the government wanted to protect and expand trails in the province.

As many members in this House know, I've written to the minister and expressed concern about this bill. I recognize that the stakeholders are here today. Some of them have issued press releases; the minister has issued press releases.

So 27 months ago, the ministry conducted some consultations. Last May, they introduced this bill. Regardless of the press releases or the comments today, there is an issue in this province regarding Bill 100. I outlined my concerns to the minister in a letter, asked for a briefing, and received the briefing this morning. I've asked for some higher level of detail from ministry staff about the consultations.

Let's talk about what's happening in Ontario today. I had a call this morning at my constituency office in my riding from the Athens snowmobile club. The entire trail from Athens to Gananoque is closed. A section north of Athens is also closed.

The Grenville snowmobile club—two sections of trail have been closed and two other property owners have indicated that, at the end of the season, they're done in terms of their agreements with the snowmobile club.

These agreements are very delicate. These interpretations are very delicate. I'm asking the government and the stakeholders to not issue press releases but to actually go out and talk to property owners about their concerns and to address them. That's the way we should move forward with Bill 100.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: My comments are very much in line with the previous speaker. I support what we are trying to do. We want trails to be available and we want people to use them and be healthy—all of this is great. But we are legislators. We read the words on the piece of paper, and the way the bill is being interpreted right now is really, really problematic for me.

I represent one of those huge ridings in northern Ontario. I represent Nickel Belt. I have gatherers, snow-

shoers, snowmobilers, ATV trails, ski trails—I have them all, and they're really heavily used. We have tons of snow this year.

But this bill has caused the same thing that it has caused in his riding. Some of the trails are now closed. We are going in the exact opposite direction of what we want to do. We want trails to be available and we want Ontarians to use them, but this bill is problematic.

Come and talk to the people in northern Ontario; come and talk to the snowmobile clubs, the snowshoer, the cross country skier. We have some of the most beautiful trails in Nickel Belt, and some of them go through farmland. The snowmobile clubs have an understanding: When you go through farmlands, they put those extra signs that say, "Don't go off the trail; protect our crops." People get that.

The farmers would never give access to their farms in the summer. They're farming them. In the winter, they let us through their farms on the trails, when they are covered with snow.

The bill is problematic. I support what the minister is trying to do. I want people out there using the trails. I want the trails to be available to all and everybody to use them, but we're talking about a piece of legislation, not a dream. I support the dream, not the piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm delighted to stand and speak for a couple of minutes about this bill in support of Ontario's trails systems. I am delighted to join my colleagues. It's a good piece of legislation.

As speakers before me have said, our trails are a treasure, a valuable element of our province's culture and heritage. I can speak to what's happening in Ontario, specifically what's happening in my riding of Newmarket–Aurora with trails. In Aurora alone, there are 57 kilometres of trails. We're working with landowners who aren't concerned. Their concerns are addressed because, like all across Ontario, associations and municipalities are sitting down with landowners and they're hearing them out. They're dealing with the issues. This piece of legislation will only make things better; I'm convinced of that.

Mr. Speaker, let me carry on about how important trail systems are to my riding and to Ontario. I've heard a lot of discussion today about recreational uses and about fitness uses, but there's another element that especially those of us in urban areas have come to rely on, and those are trails for use as active transportation: getting our children off the streets, a way for our children to get from their houses to their schools without crossing busy intersections, having them enjoy a little bit of nature as they move about, and business people being able to get to their jobs from their houses without having to climb into a car; let's not forget that. That's another reason I'm delighted that this bill is moving along.

Trails offer a place to explore and experience the breathtaking beauty and rich cultural heritage that we identify with Ontario. So the bill before this House is

informed by knowledge, valuable experience and perspectives shared by a wide variety of interested and passionate stakeholders across the province. I encourage all my colleagues to support this bill. Come and explore some of the 57 kilometres in Aurora.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? Questions and comments?

The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank all the members who commented this morning on the bill. I would like to assure members opposite that, if you read this bill in its entirety, you will see that it is a bill that's good for Ontario.

I understand that the member from Leeds–Grenville says that there has been some confusion in his riding. I've made this offer to him, and I've made offers to other members in his caucus who are taking us up on the offer. I'll make the same offer to the third party: If you have a club, if there's a municipality, or anyone who wants to talk to us, we will get people from the public service to reach out to have those conversations.

I understand that if you're the critic, if you're the opposition, if you're the third party, it's not your job to make the government look good. It's your job to criticize and to hold us accountable. But we know this piece of legislation is a good piece of legislation. It protects landowners. It clears the way if there are any foggy areas when it comes to liability. Let's get rid of the partisanship, and let's deal with the issue.

I've issued a statement saying that section 12 is very clear. There are no easement rights that will be imposed by any governments on landowners. The landowners' association issued a press release that was wrong. I issued a statement correcting them, from our opinion. We've talked to legal counsel.

If you have anyone in your community—the member from Leeds–Grenville, especially—who has an issue, give us the phone number. We will call them directly and we will work with them. There are almost 1,000 volunteer organizations out there. We can't get to every single volunteer organization. If there's an issue, we can help them on that issue. Get us the numbers, and we will call them directly. We will work with you. Take me up on my offer to help you deal with these issues locally.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M^{me} Andrea Horwath: Aujourd'hui, j'aimerais accueillir à l'Assemblée législative les coprésidentes du Regroupement étudiant franco-ontarien, Geneviève Borris, Rym Ben Berrah et Myriam Vigneault; le président de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, Denis Vaillancourt; le président de la Fédération de la jeunesse

franco-ontarienne, Jérémie Spadafora; la directrice générale de La Passerelle, Léonie Tchatat; et le président d'Action Positive VIH/SIDA, Carlos Idibouo.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my great pleasure to welcome former member of Parliament Sarkis Assadourian, sitting in the members' gallery. As well, it's a great pleasure to introduce the Tashjian family, who just recently arrived from Syria. Please help me welcome Shahe, Anoush, Hrair and Hrag Tashjian. Welcome to Canada, welcome to Ontario and welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Mr. Barry Hunt, president and CEO of Class 1 Inc., an innovative medical gas company headquartered in Waterloo region. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to welcome my niece Rebekka Schultz and her friend Sarah Curran, both on their reading week, visiting Queen's Park for the first time. I welcome them here.

I'd also like to acknowledge the presence of Alison Brown, who is my OLIP intern. It's her last day. I want to thank her.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm pleased to welcome my honorary constituent Mr. Lee Montgomery to Queen's Park today. I'd also like to welcome Dr. Magda Havas and Sheena Symington. They've been tied up in traffic, but they will be here.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to welcome Michael Eggens to the gallery today. He is the father of our page Ryan Eggens and comes from Guelph. Welcome.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Speaker, it's Heritage Day. We have members of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario up in the west gallery. Please welcome president Catherine Nasmith, Kae Elgie, Jean Haalboom and others who have joined us today to speak to our members about Heritage Day. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome a couple of guests to the members' lobby: Jennifer Mills from Quinte and District Rehabilitation services and Sue VanderBent from the Ontario Home Care Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to welcome here in the Legislature Amanda Ramroop, who's a Ryerson student working in my constituency office, and Darlene Ferreira, my legislative assistant. Welcome.

M. Yvan Baker: J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue aux étudiants de ma circonscription d'Etobicoke Centre. I'd like to welcome students from the grade 5 class of Valleyfield public school and their teacher, Lorraine Vasilaros, who are touring Queen's Park today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd also like to welcome in the public gallery Alison Storey Davidson. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: In the members' east gallery this morning, I have friends and constituents of Cambridge: Brian and Glenna Haggie and Ian Hope. Welcome.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I would like to welcome Wendy Fritz, who is here this morning. She's the mother of page captain Charlotte Fritz. She's here to see Char-

lotte today, of course. I make the introduction on behalf of Tim Hudak, who was unable to be in the House.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to welcome to the gallery today Zheng Wong, a Ryerson student who is going to be helping out today.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome Mr. Rick Miller from the great riding of Northumberland—Quinte West. Welcome.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The member for Sarnia—Lambton is probably on his way, but I want to introduce the mother of page Tristan Bhola, Patricia Bhikam Bhola, who is here in the public gallery this morning. Welcome.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I do stand today for an introduction, because tomorrow is an historic day in the province of Ontario. It is the birthday of one James J. Bradley, the esteemed member from St. Catharines.

I know I'm slightly breaking protocol, but because he is the dean of the Legislature, I know you'll give me a little flexibility this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Maybe.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Now, Jim, I want to give this to you on behalf of our caucus. Happy birthday, Jim.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —wouldn't reveal his age, so I'll leave it at that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? I suspect he's going to make note of that in his "WhiteBerry."

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. It has been one year since the Chief Electoral Officer tabled his scathing report into the actions of Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed Jr. in the Sudbury by-election—a first for Ontario. No chief electoral officer before Mr. Essensa has ever made a finding of apparent attempts at bribery under the Election Act.

Mr. Essensa pointed to the Premier's very own deputy chief of staff as the source of these apparent contraventions. Pat Sorbara continues to work in the Premier's office, despite the fact that a dark cloud hangs over her head.

Mr. Speaker, a year after this historic finding by the Chief Electoral Officer, the Premier has still assumed no responsibility. Will the Premier finally do the right thing and remove Pat Sorbara from her office?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.
Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I've been very open with the Legislature and with the media and the public about any of the allegations that have been put forward. As far as I know, the Elections Ontario investigation that the Leader of the Opposition is speaking about is ongoing, and we'll continue to co-operate with that independent investigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. Back to the Premier: While Pat Sorbara may not have been charged with her partner in crime, Gerry Lougheed Jr., she continues to be under OPP investigation for the apparent contravention to the Election Act.

Never before—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. I know what to do and when.

Please finish.

Mr. Steve Clark: Never before has a Premier allowed someone with so much influence to remain in their position while under police investigation. Integrity in the Premier's office seems to be a foreign concept to this government.

Mr. Speaker, if Ms. Sorbara is charged under the Election Act, will the Premier finally ask her to step aside?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been very clear with the public. I've answered hundreds of questions on this issue. There's an Elections Ontario investigation going on. It's an independent investigation. It's taking place outside of this House. We'll continue to co-operate with that investigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: Again to the Premier: For one year, Ms. Sorbara has had unfettered access to the Premier and all the government's documents. Her predecessor, Laura Miller, is charged herself with making important government documents disappear.

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Common sense would dictate that Pat Sorbara step aside while under OPP investigation. You heard the Premier; she won't even entertain the thought. This Premier, like her predecessor, will stop at nothing to protect her own personal political interests and hang on to power.

Why should the public believe that this government hasn't once again wiped away all evidence of wrongdoing?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, Speaker, I think that common sense will dictate that the opposition will respect the convention of this House and not interfere in an ongoing investigation. Clearly they have no other important issues to talk about. Clearly they have no plan for Ontario, that

they continue to focus on an investigation that is outside the scope and jurisdiction of this Legislature.

In fact, I would remind the member from Leeds–Grenville that he said himself, back in February, “Stop interfering in an ongoing investigation and let it run its course.” Speaker, I agree with him—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I agree with his earlier statement that there is an independent investigation and to let it run its course. I think the PC Party should focus on building a plan for Ontario as opposed to just scandalmongering in this House.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. The government's recent agreement with correctional officers only addressed one of the serious concerns facing our corrections system. Monte Vieselmeyer, the corrections chair of OPSEU's ministry employee relations committee, said this recently to the finance committee in Windsor: “The crisis is very real and is compromising the safety of staff, offenders and all Ontarians we serve.” He said that in one year, “the ministry recorded over 900 staffing-related lockdowns across the province.” Lastly, he said, “We have seen a significant corresponding rise in inmate-on-staff assaults,” 855 in 2013 alone.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government failing to protect the hard-working men and women who work in our corrections system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services will want to speak to this, but I want to have the opportunity to say that in the reaching of a collective agreement with OPSEU and with respect to the correctional bargaining unit, the work will be ongoing. Part of that agreement was that we would continue to work with them on things like better mental health supports and enhancing rehabilitation and reintegration programs, and building safer, stronger communities right across our province by doing that. We recognize that there is more to be done. We recognize that there needs to be transformation within the system.

Having said that, we have hired hundreds of new correctional officers—571 new correctional officers since the fall of 2013; 144 new recruits are going through the training right now. That's the largest group ever.

We recognize there's more to be done, but we are already in that process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: In December, I toured the Thunder Bay jail along with several members of our PC caucus. I could not believe such deplorable conditions could exist in a jail like this in the province of Ontario. The mayor of Thunder Bay was

being generous when he called it a “rathole.” Mike Lundy, the head of the local correctional officers, said, “Toilets don’t flush.” They “regularly back up and overflow down into our kitchen area.” “Sinks have no running water. There are holes and mould throughout the crumbling structure.” There are no working sprinklers or smoke detectors.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Premier would never work in such disgusting conditions. Why, then, does she expect our correctional officers to work in these conditions?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want our correctional institutions to be safe for the people who work in them and for the inmates. I want a transformation that actually leads to rehabilitation. I want changes within the correctional service, which is why, in the mandate letter to the minister, he is charged with making those changes.

But I want to say that the Leader of the Opposition, I believe—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Are your wants just stretch goals?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, second time.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: He was a member of a government in Ottawa, in the Harper regime, who had no interest in rehabilitation, no interest in working with the provinces on corrections, and no interest in ensuring that there was justice or transformation in our correctional institutions. I don’t remember the Leader of the Opposition speaking up when he was a member in Ottawa for nine years.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Start the clock. Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: Throwing insults at past federal governments doesn’t help correctional officers.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Dodging and deflecting doesn’t help correctional officers. Mike Lundy from the Thunder Bay jail said it’s “a death trap for staff and inmates, packed in like human sardines.” Mr. Lundy said, “Severe overcrowding and chronic understaffing led to a full-blown riot....” There was a correctional officer who was taken hostage for 12 hours.

I saw the first-hand account. I visited the jail. So my question is very sincere: Madam Premier, will you visit the jail? Will you go to the jail? Will you see it yourself? Don’t send someone else because, if you see it, you won’t stand for it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I would just ask the Leader of the Opposition to do his homework and recognize I have been in jails. I visited jails with the Attorney General when she was the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. That’s exactly why, in the minister’s mandate letter, there is a charge to transform that system. I have visited jails. I understand that there are concerns—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: But our solution will never be to throw more people in jail. Our solution will never be to increase the overcrowding. Our solution will be to focus on rehabilitation—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Your time is up, but I’m going to wait until I get some quiet.

New question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. People expect the government to share their priorities, like creating good jobs and protecting health care that we all rely on, but this Premier just doesn’t seem to get those priorities. She doesn’t seem to share those priorities with Ontarians.

More than 400 registered nursing jobs have been cut from our hospitals since the start of January, and almost every day we hear of another Ontario hospital that is being forced by the Premier to cut patient care.

People want to know: Why is the Premier cutting health care when she knows that these cuts are hurting Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reality is, as I have said over and over, and as the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has said, that over 24,000 more nurses are working in Ontario than were working here in 2003—a growth of 21%. Over 10,800 RNs have been added since 2003.

As I said yesterday, there are hospitals and health sciences centres that are hiring full-time nurses right now: Ottawa Hospital, Hamilton Health Sciences centre, Orillia Soldiers’ Memorial Hospital and the Royal Ottawa mental health care group. The fact is there are institutions all over the province that are hiring.

We’re going through a transformation. There’s no doubt about that. Health care is being delivered in community, where people need it, but we are increasing funding year over year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, similar to what the Premier’s last comment was, yesterday she had the audacity to say that her plan doesn’t include cutting health care. The Premier should actually pay more attention to what she’s doing and spend less time selling off Hydro One and helping Liberal insiders.

1050

Here’s what’s happening in Ontario that the Premier doesn’t seem to think much about: Patient care is

suffering—end of story. Patient care is suffering. Nearly 1,200 registered nursing jobs in this province have been cut in just over a year. Those Liberal cuts, no matter which way you look at them, mean longer wait times for patients, fewer nurses in our hospitals and even less care for Ontarians when they need it the most.

Why does this Premier think that patients should pay the price for her deep cuts to our health care system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm absolutely amazed by the allegations coming from the third party.

Once again, here are the facts—and they're not even ours on the government side; they're from the College of Nurses of Ontario: Ontario nurses held 86,794 employment positions in the hospital sector in 2014, and by the end of 2015 that had increased by almost 1,000 more positions, to 87,513.

They fired nurses when they were in power in the 1990s. We've added—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Windsor West and the member from Hamilton Mountain, come to order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: They actually reduced the number of full-time positions for nurses when they were in power.

We've increased the proportion of nurses: 30% more nurses working full-time since we came to government in 2003. The numbers increase year after year after year.

I'm happy to give more facts and truthful statements.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's another thing the Premier said yesterday: She said her changes to health care are causing "some disruption in the system." But "disruption" does not begin to describe the damage that this Liberal government is doing to our health care here in this province: 1,200 nursing jobs cut, less care when hospital patients need it the most, and seniors waiting hundreds of days for home care and years upon years for long-term care. That is not disrupting; that is devastating for patients and for their loved ones.

When will this Premier start thinking about the priorities of patients, about the priorities of families, about what's happening in our health care system, and stop cutting health care in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm flabbergasted.

The facts are, when you look at the outcomes, when you look at the wait times that are being measured in this province and across the country, Ontario remains in the first place of the shortest wait times. I could go on and on in terms of the outcomes. We have one of the best cancer care systems and best cancer outcomes in the world. I'm proud of that, and I'm proud of the hard work that all our health care professionals do day after day after day in this great province.

The truth is simply the opposite of what the third party would like to portray. We're increasing investments.

We're increasing staffing across the health care system. We're making those important investments: 270 million additional new dollars in home and community care this year alone. We're making those important transitional reforms, but it's resulting in better care.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. For most Ontarians, life is getting harder, and the Liberals just aren't helping. People want good jobs—the kind of jobs that come with good pay, decent benefits and the security of knowing that you can pay the bills. But families are struggling and good jobs are hard to find. The government should be focused on helping families, but instead, this Premier is more focused on selling off Hydro One.

Why is this Premier more interested in helping private investors turn a profit when she should be helping the people of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely focused on job creation. We're focused on working with businesses so that they can expand. I was at Morgan Solar yesterday, which is a very innovative solar panel manufacturer. They are expanding their operation in Ontario. We made an announcement today that will have an effect on the wine industry in Ontario, that will create more jobs in the wine industry.

We are absolutely focused on how we can play to the strengths of Ontario to create those jobs that are going to provide security for families in Ontario. That is our number one focus. In the budget next week, it will be very clear that that is what our plan is doing, and we continue to work with the private sector, with organizations around the province to make sure that we grow.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier should know what's actually happening here in the province of Ontario.

In Ontario today, youth unemployment has been above the national average for 12 years running. The whole time this government has been in office, youth unemployment has been running above the national average, and fewer than half of the workers—fewer than half—in the GTHA are working in permanent, full-time jobs.

The Premier should be helping people and focusing on job creation, but she is more interested in the private investors and the profits that they can make off her sell-off of Hydro One. Ontarians deserve to know, why is this Premier not working for them?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The leader of the opposition needs to get her facts straight. This province has grown by 208,000 net new jobs since the global recession, and don't be telling me those aren't full-time jobs. Every single one of those jobs is full-time because we're migrating from—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions are to the Chair; answers are to the Chair.

Finish, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the challenges that our economy has right now is that we have an opposition in this Legislature that's—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order.

Hon. Brad Duguid: —advocating jacking up corporate tax rates, which is going to kill jobs. We have an opposition leader in this Legislature who is opposing the important investments we're making: \$130 billion over 10 years to create 110,000 jobs per year. If you were to support those policies, then we might have sympathy with your concerns—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Although the minister is finished, I'm going to ask the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek to come to order, second time.

And a reminder to everyone: You always refer to members in this House either by their riding or by their title; that helps with the debate, hopefully.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I find it astounding that the minister of economic development and trade could say he has no sympathy whatsoever with the opposition's concerns over the lack of good jobs for the people of this province. That is astounding, Speaker.

This minister can come here with all the bluster in the world, but the reality is that the youth unemployment rate has been higher than the national average for 12 years running under this Liberal government's tutelage all that time. They have done nothing to help young people with work.

But Ontarians have clear priorities. They expect the Premier to protect health care and to focus on creating jobs, but she doesn't seem to share those priorities. Over the past year, she has started selling off Hydro One to help a small group of private investors turn a profit. At the same time, they failed to create the 32,000 jobs that they had promised in last year's budget. So again, lots of plans but no action.

Why can this Premier stretch to help her Liberal friends but not stretch at all to help Ontarians?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This government is absolutely committed to helping our young people find opportunities in this growing Ontario economy, an economy that's leading this country in growth, leading this country in job creation. That's why the Premier has put in place a youth jobs strategy; 30,000 young people have seen employment opportunities as a result of that strategy.

Did we have support from the NDP when we brought in these policies? Absolutely not. In fact, they continue to harp on antiquated—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo will come to order.

Please finish.

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Hon. Brad Duguid: Speaker, if the NDP really cared about youth employment, they would have the courage to make the investments that we're making in infrastructure, which are providing our young people with apprenticeship opportunities right across this province. They don't have that courage; we do. We're standing up for young people and jobs across this country—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Premier. I've stood in this House and said to the Premier repeatedly that she needs to do more to combat human trafficking in Ontario. I've called for a co-ordinated task force, I have flagged numerous instances demanding action, but this government has done nothing.

As my private member's bill, Saving the Girl Next Door Act, outlines, a number of things can be done immediately, without further delay. Right now, although police units want to combat this crime, they do not have the resources they need. Very few police units are able to dedicate officers to deal with human trafficking and most don't have the resources to start.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier immediately commit to providing the financial resources police services need to effectively combat human trafficking?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opposition member's focus on human trafficking. She knows full well that we are following up on the recommendations of the select committee.

When we brought in our anti-sexual violence and harassment policy, It's Never Okay, I said at that time that the select committee was working on initiatives that were going to complement and continue the work of that policy.

We're already taking steps on the ground. We're building on the work of the committee. We're setting up that multi-ministerial advisory panel that was recommended. It will be co-led by Minister Naqvi and Minister MacCharles. They're going to work closely with the experts who were recommended on the front lines to bring forward a strategy that we will bring forward by June.

I've also asked the violence-against-women round table co-chairs to convene a special meeting on human trafficking. Our officials are already in conversation with Manitoba.

It's clear to all of us that information needs to be better co-ordinated, and this work connects with the work on the inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women. There's more to be done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: The crisis is now. We can take some actions now. We don't need to wait until June.

In addition to the action items in my private member's bill, Saving the Girl Next Door, we know the fight

against human traffic is woefully underfunded. I've heard time and time again that more financial support is needed on many fronts.

As it stands, our police colleges have no routine training on human trafficking. Police units need adequate funding for dedicated officers and further training. Since 2012, Manitoba has committed to at least four times what this province has.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier immediately commit to financial resources comparable to Manitoba's levels and make human trafficking a priority?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is very much a priority, as I have said. I have already said that we are in conversation with Manitoba to understand what they are doing. I'm sure that some of the measures in the private member's bill that the member is bringing forward will be part of the conversation as we develop the strategy, but they will only be part of it. I understand there are two or three things that are being suggested by the member. There is a much broader strategy that needs to be put in place. We're going to do that.

We've already begun that work, so when the member opposite says, "The crisis is now," we understand that. That's why the work has started now. That strategy will come forward, but it will be a complete strategy. I appreciate the input of the member opposite.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. This government speaks about economic growth, but it is so out of touch with Ontarians that it doesn't even realize that millions of people are being left behind.

This government failed to meet its job creation goals last year not once, but twice. They failed to create more than 32,000 jobs that they themselves had forecast in last year's budget.

For nearly two years, Windsor and Essex county has remained among the top regions with the highest unemployment rate in the country. Windsor has also had the highest youth unemployment rate in the country for the fifth straight month.

Speaker, my question is simple: What will it take before this government stands up for Ontarians instead of prioritizing its powerful insider friends?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for the question.

Look, the fact of the matter is that, since the recession, we've created 608,000 net new jobs, all full-time, in this province. The challenge we have, though—the member is not completely off-base—is that there are regions in this country that were hit harder during the global recession than other regions. That's why we've created the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund and the Eastern Ontario Development Fund. That's why we partner with companies, many in the Windsor area, to create much-needed jobs there, in particular manufacturing jobs. That's why we partner closely with the auto sector, many

of those jobs being created in southwestern Ontario. That's why we have very good relations with companies like Chrysler, which just recently announced 1,200 new jobs in the Chrysler plant there.

Mr. Speaker, there's more work to do—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Message sent, I hope?

Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Time and time again, and as we've just seen, this government toasts itself on a job well done, but Ontarians feel the service cuts. They feel the job losses and the increase in energy costs due to the sell-off of Hydro One. People are struggling, and this government doesn't really seem to care.

Just yesterday, Speaker, Bombardier announced that 430 jobs would be cut in Ontario. Up to 350 of them would be directly in Thunder Bay. In the past three months, another 400 people were laid off at Bombardier's Downsview plant in Toronto. These are not just numbers, Speaker; they are real people with real lives. They are families that are forced to start all over again.

Minister, when will your government stand up for hard-working Ontarians and make meaningful change in their lives and in this province?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This government has always and will continue to stand up for hard-working Ontarians. That's why it's so important for us to make \$130 billion worth of investment in our infrastructure, something that your leader doesn't support. But we'll continue to make those important investments.

We also will stand up for those communities that are struggling. That's why we are proud to make a \$3.5-million investment in London—nearly \$30 million in all in private sector funds, creating 1,400 jobs. That's why in Windsor, we are proud to invest \$4.5 million, leveraging \$22 million in jobs and creating and sustaining over 420 jobs. In Essex, your own riding, our Southwestern Ontario Development Fund invested \$1 million, leveraging \$7 million and creating and sustaining 513 jobs.

I point to these examples. They are examples of many—I have a long list of examples where we have gone to bat for the people of Windsor—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Ma question est pour le ministre de l'Énergie.

An issue that is important to my constituents of Ottawa-Orléans concerns the environment and, by extension, energy conservation savings. During the campaign, I heard about this from many of my constituents who live in the older neighbourhood of Orléans. They told me they wanted government action to help increase residential conservation efforts, and also help them lower their energy bills and save money.

I know that our government recognizes the importance of conserving energy and has been working to create a culture of conservation savings in the province. Every action across every sector will help us achieve our GHG reduction targets.

In the past couple of weeks, I've heard our government discussing a home energy retrofit plan that will help fund the Green Investment Fund. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, could he please inform the House about this program?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member from Ottawa—Orléans for the question.

In addition to a wide range of existing residential and industrial conservation programs, Ontario is investing \$100 million more as part of our Green Investment Fund to help homeowners upgrade their homes, reduce their energy bills and cut greenhouse gas emissions. This investment is expected to enable audits and retrofits of up to 37,000 homes and save an equivalent of 1.6 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

Funding will reward actions by homeowners, like replacing furnaces and water heaters and upgrading insulation, that will save consumers money and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Every dollar invested in natural gas efficiency has resulted in up to \$4 in savings for natural gas consumers.

Mr. Speaker, this investment will help homeowners save money while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we know climate change is not a distant threat to Ontario. It is already costing the people of Ontario. It has created more unpredictable weather patterns, which have devastated communities, damaged homes, businesses and crops, and increased insurance rates.

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We know that we had to meet this challenge head-on and that good climate policy is good economic policy. That's why in the fall economic statement we introduced the Green Investment Fund. It will demonstrate how proceeds from a cap-and-trade program will benefit our environment, our economy, our homes, businesses and communities.

I know that recently there was an announcement through the Green Investment Fund to help Ontarians with home energy retrofits. Can the minister please inform the House how this announcement will help our efforts in combatting climate change?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I would just like to make three points, and I want to thank my friend from Orléans. One is the impact of this. We've been debating employment—and my friend the Minister of Economic Development makes these points—and what is the government doing? We have to retrofit every single building in Ontario over the next couple of decades. We're retro-

fitting them with better insulation, ground-source heat pumps and pollution-free home heating and cooling systems, things that will lower electricity and energy costs for Ontarians over the coming decades.

But what's most important: Can you imagine how many hundreds of thousands of people have to be employed to do that, what this means to our building sector, what it means to our energy and our technology companies? What we're embarking on, Mr. Speaker, will be one of the biggest job-creation programs in the history of Ontario, one that will result in more modern buildings and lower pollution.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: My final point is this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There isn't a final point to be made. Thank you.

New question.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I don't have to remind the minister of the terrible events that took place in my riding on September 22 of last year. The murders of three women have been well documented and broadly discussed since then.

On November 5, my Bill 130 passed second reading. My bill would have afforded greater protection to victims of abuse if and when their abusers were released from custody. At the time, I asked for one of two things: that the government move my bill quickly through the process or draft a comprehensive piece of legislation to give greater protection to victims of abuse. Can the minister tell me what progress has been made, and when we might see some concrete action on this file?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I do want to thank the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for his work and advocacy on this very important issue. Speaker, we all know that what happened in Wilno was shocking and devastating for not only that community but for all Ontarians. The member opposite knows that I've been engaged with him. He and I have had a few very constructive conversations. He also knows that I support his bill.

In fact, as part of the work that my ministry is doing—the part of the work that the Premier was alluding to earlier, which is contained in my mandate letter—is around transformation of our correctional services, this is very much in active consideration. Part of that transformation planning is to look at our legislation, and identify the deficiencies and how we can strengthen it. I can assure the member opposite that his private member's bill is very much an active part of those discussions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the minister. Since my bill passed second reading, I've met with advocates in my riding who are looking for action. I've also met with Lara Kuzyk, the sister of Anastasia. They have all expressed a strong desire to see this enacted into law.

While I respect that this is only one part of the many things we can do for women who find themselves in abusive situations, it is nevertheless an important piece.

This afternoon, my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock will be debating her Bill 158, the Saving the Girl Next Door Act, which deals with the scourge of human trafficking.

Speaker, it is time that this government tackles abuse from every angle and takes all measures to ensure that the children of today grow up in a society that will simply not tolerate any form of abuse or violence against women. We need a commitment to action, not words. Can we count on the minister's commitment today?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Absolutely. We have an activist agenda on this side of the House in not just talking about these issues but actually coming with concrete strategies to address them. I think the time for more task forces and studies is not what is needed here. We know what some of the challenges are. Our probation and parole officers do incredible work on the front lines, making sure that those who have been released from our institutions have the services available to them to better reintegrate in the communities.

That's why one of the things I have been doing is meeting with probation and parole officers directly to hear from them about their front-line experiences. I had an incredible meeting in Thunder Bay a few weeks ago, where we had a very constructive discussion. I will be in London, Ontario, this afternoon visiting the local probation and parole office and meeting with the officers there to understand their perspective, so that we can collectively transform the system that really focuses on re-integrating individuals back into society and breaking the cycle of re-offence in our communities.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. Earlier this month, we learned that ridership on the Union Pearson Express is not growing; it is, in fact, shrinking. The president of the Union Pearson Express blamed Torontonians for not getting on board, but had Metrolinx bothered to listen to Torontonians, it would have known long ago that what they want is an electrified public transit service that is affordable and is accessible.

Why is Metrolinx blaming the people for low ridership on the Union Pearson Express instead of listening to us?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member from Parkdale-High Park for the question. As I said yesterday in the Legislature, and as both I and the Premier have said over the last number of days, we understand that ridership numbers are lower than anticipated and lower than we'd like them to be, which means that we are all working hard, both within this government and also at Metrolinx, to make sure we analyze the entire situation so that we can get ridership up.

I did mention yesterday that this past Family Day weekend, the UP Express was free and we saw literally tens of thousands of people take advantage of it. What we do understand is that when the UP Express is used, the research demonstrates that it is a service that is very well regarded. Collectively, we have to work hard to make sure we get those numbers up, and we're looking at every aspect of the service to make sure we produce that outcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Back to the Premier: There are 10 times the number of riders on the Dufferin bus and it doesn't have its own marketing department. The Union Pearson Express was originally supposed to be run by the private sector, at no cost to the public, but the private sector understood that this business model wouldn't work.

Despite this, the Minister of Transportation at the time insisted that the air-rail link proceed as planned under the same flawed business model and asked Metrolinx to take over the project. That minister is now the Premier.

Does the Premier now regret her decision to ignore all the warning signs, ignore the experts, ignore the people and push ahead with an expensive, empty, dirty diesel train?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: As I've said on many occasions, what we have to remember, above all else, about this service, Speaker, is that because of the leadership of this government, because of the leadership of this Premier, it was an infrastructure project that was delivered on time and on budget, in time for the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games, as promised.

Having said that, as I said in my earlier answer, there is broad recognition by this government and by the team at Metrolinx that we have to work hard to make sure that we use every available tool, including looking at the fare structure, to drive ridership up. Because, again, we know that when the people of this region—tourists or residents who live here—use the service, they like the service.

I should also mention that it is part of our 10-year commitment to electrify the UP Express, as we are electrifying that portion of the Kitchener corridor that we own. I would say that members like the member from York South-Weston and the member from Davenport on this side have been strong advocates to make sure we get this right, and we will—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Health care is a top priority for our government. As a registered nurse and former care co-ordinator for the CCAC in Cam-

bridge, I was concerned by some of the things that I've heard from the opposition in the last few days about health care.

Under the last NDP government, I was one of many nurses who were laid off because they slashed the home care budget. They also short-sightedly cut nursing school and medical school places. The Conservatives made further cuts, firing nurses and closing thousands of hospital beds.

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Last year, our government increased the health care budget by over \$500 million, to \$50.8 billion. In home and community care, the government announced a 5% increase which will grow by over \$750 million.

Can the minister please set the record straight regarding our government's investments in the health care sector?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Cambridge for this very important question.

I, too, have to admit I was alarmed by some of the accusations and innuendoes coming from the official opposition and third party members with regard to our health care system. We remember when the PCs were in power: 6,000 nurses, of course, were fired; hospitals were closed. In the last election, we were reminded of their commitment to cut 100,000 jobs. Thousands—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You will get to government policy. Thank you.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: That's right. Get to government policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me, leader of the third party, I'll take care of it.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I apologize, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's get there, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thousands of personal support workers, nurses and other hospital support staff would have lost their jobs.

The truth is, we're far from making cuts. We're increasing funding every single year to the health care sector and we've invested more than—as an example—\$4.3 billion in the home and community sector this year alone. We've increased funding by a further \$270 million. Our investments in community care will keep people healthier and away from hospitals and in their communities, where they want to be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Setting the record straight in this House is important. Thank you, Minister.

The increased investments that we're making in home and community care as well as in the hospital sector speak to the high priority that this government places on health care. Because of the government's commitment to health care, 24,000 more nurses are working in Ontario since taking office, a growth of 21.6%, and over 10,800 registered nurses have been added. Nurses play such a valuable and important role in our health care system in Ontario.

We know that one in five Ontarians will experience a mental health illness in their lifetime and that this is a critical issue here in Ontario. I know that since 2003 our government has increased annual funding for mental health and addictions to more than \$2 billion.

Can the minister please inform the House of the investments the government has made in mental health and addictions?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you again to the member from Cambridge for this question.

I can firmly say that this government is wholly and absolutely committed to increasing access to mental health care for Ontarians. Our government created a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy to support Ontarians, from childhood through to old age, living with mental health and addictions challenges, and each year we're increasing funding to that sector. Last year we committed to increase funding to mental health and addictions by a further, new \$138 million over the next three years.

We're also increasing our adaptability to meet the genuine needs of our patients. Just last month, we announced that we're investing \$16 million in 1,000 new supportive housing units across the province for individuals with mental health and addictions challenges.

GROUND CURRENT POLLUTION

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, it's a known fact that there's a major problem facing rural Ontarians. It concerns the future of family farming businesses. It's a known fact that farmers raising livestock are facing a major crisis that threatens the future of farming in Ontario. Ground current pollution is maiming and even killing their livestock. It's crippling their financial opportunities to live the Ontarian dream. They feed cities. They feed you and me, our families and our neighbours.

Minister, are you willing to enforce recommendations from the OEB's staff discussion paper of May 2008 that stipulates that LDCs cannot put current into the ground? Thomas Edison said it, and who knows more than him? Speaker, to the minister, are you willing to save the family farm?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the honourable member for Chatham-Kent-Essex for asking the question this morning.

I know there will be a debate this afternoon. He's bringing forward a private member's bill on this topic, a bill that was previously introduced in this House by a former colleague of ours, Maria Van Bommel, the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex, I believe. I also have the advice of a professor from Trent University, Dr. Magda Havas, who is in the members' west gallery today.

This is a very serious problem for livestock owners in the province of Ontario. Just recently, Hydro One and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture are working together to

study this issue in detail, and I'm pleased that some steps have already been taken to address it.

I encourage, of course, livestock owners—when I'm chatting with my friend Ralph Dietrich, head of the dairy farmers in the province of Ontario; and just last night at the Beef Farmers of Ontario, I had a discussion about this important topic.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Minister, voltage won't kill, but current does. We have to ensure that we're measuring the right thing.

My bill is directly inspired by the work of former Liberal MPP Maria Van Bommel from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. She attempted to pass the bill back in 2006. All three parties spoke in support of the bill, including you. I believe that a good idea for Ontarians—it shouldn't matter who presents it.

Speaker, this afternoon, we will be joined by members from numerous farming associations that, frankly, really don't care whose name is on the bill. They just want to see action now.

To the minister: Will you keep the spirit of co-operation alive and pledge support for Bill 161, the Elimination of Ground Current Pollution Act?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his supplementary question today. I can assure him that the government caucus will be supporting his bill this afternoon—

Interjection: Because we're reasonable.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —because it's a very reasonable bill, and we're very reasonable people on this side of the chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to talk about the pilot that's going on with the OFA. We're making progress on this. The pilot will help: identify, assess and mitigate instances of stray voltage and current; assess alternative approaches to testing; look broadly at how electrical systems contribute to current and voltage on farms; and address how standards and procedures are applied.

In fact, we're doing a pilot in Little Britain, Ontario, in the riding of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock—the member right across the road here.

L'UNIVERSITÉ DE L'ONTARIO FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. Aujourd'hui, des centaines de personnes de partout en Ontario sont à Queen's Park pour dénoncer la lenteur du gouvernement dans le dossier de la création de l'Université de l'Ontario français.

Après des mois de consultations auprès d'un millier de francophones de toutes les régions et services de l'Ontario, le résultat des États généraux sur le postsecondaire est criant et sans équivoque : on veut une université pour et par les francophones. Le document final a été remis à la première ministre le 18 février 2015. Ça fait un an.

Est-ce que la première ministre peut expliquer pourquoi elle n'a toujours pas mis en place le comité

transitoire de gouvernance de l'Université de l'Ontario français?

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Merci pour cette question. C'est très important pour moi que nous ayons les programmes pour les étudiants, en français, dans toute la province. Je veux dire que j'ai parlé avec les étudiants et j'ai dit que c'est une priorité pour moi d'avoir accès à tous les programmes en français si un étudiant veut ces programmes.

Est-ce que c'est nécessaire d'avoir un édifice? Je ne sais pas. Je ne peux pas le dire en ce moment parce que si nous avons un édifice dans cette communauté, est-ce que c'est nécessaire d'avoir un autre édifice dans une autre communauté? Donc, nous devons avoir plus de consultations. Nous devons travailler avec les communautés parce que c'est très important, comme j'ai dit, que nous ayons l'accès, pour les étudiants, à tous les programmes nécessaires en français au postsecondaire.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Question?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Madame la Première Ministre, 611 500 francophones de la province manquent d'options postsecondaires en français. Plus de 2 000 d'entre eux se sont inscrits à l'Université de l'Ontario français. Nous avons dû travailler fort pour nos écoles primaires, puis secondaires, puis les conseils scolaires et puis, il y a 20 ans, nos collèges. Nous avons maintenant besoin d'une université pour et par les francophones.

1130

Les consultations ont été faites, les rapports ont été écrits, la communauté francophone est unie dans son désir d'avoir l'Université de l'Ontario français, et j'ajoute que cette Assemblée législative a voté en faveur de mon projet de loi 104 pour la création de cette université.

Quand est-ce que la ministre va finalement mettre en place le comité transitoire de gouvernance de l'Université de l'Ontario français?

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: La ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ça me fait plaisir de répondre à cette question parce que le gouvernement libéral, présent et passé, y travaille depuis très longtemps. La première ministre a demandé un comité aviseur. Le comité aviseur s'appête à remettre son rapport. Alors, on est très intéressé à voir ce qu'a le comité aviseur.

Maintenant, je ne prendrai pas de conseils de ce parti-là. Quand ils étaient au gouvernement, ils ont établi un Collège des Grands Lacs, un collège qui n'a mené à rien, qui a coûté des millions et des millions aux Ontariens et qui n'a mené absolument à rien. Le gouvernement par la suite—le gouvernement qui est maintenant le premier parti d'opposition—l'a fermé et on ne pouvait rien dire parce que c'était tellement une structure chancelante.

On veut être sûr que la prochaine université postsecondaire francophone en Ontario sera bâtie sur une base solide et va assurer une pérennité—

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

New question.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Aujourd'hui, ma question est pour la ministre de l'Éducation, l'honorable Liz Sandals.

Speaker, as you will appreciate, the education of our children in Ontario's schools benefits when we have parents involved, excited and engaged, and contributing. In my own riding of Etobicoke North, I have seen how good schools can graduate up to become great schools by the increased engagement of parents. Psychological and sociological research demonstrates that there is a positive link between student achievement and parents' involvement, expectations and guidance. Schools in my own riding have benefited from some of the more than \$60 million we've invested since 2006 to support parent engagement.

Speaker, my question is this: Minister, this very week you announced grant applications for the 2016-17 school year which are now open. Can you please tell this House more about what this means for Ontario students and families?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Ontario is helping parents get more involved in their children's education by supporting local parent-led projects that encourage student learning and promote well-being.

In the 2015-16 school year, the province funded more than 2,200 projects that helped identify barriers to parent engagement, and found local solutions to help more parents be engaged in their children's learning. In fact, since 2006, the government has awarded over 17,000 grants to school councils and over 680 regional or provincial grants, a total investment of over \$27 million to parent-led projects. Parents Reaching Out Grants demonstrate that parents are working to find local solutions to enhance parent engagement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Merci, madame la Ministre, pour votre réponse et aussi for your commitment to this file. I have myself seen the on-the-ground benefits. For example, Albion Heights Junior Middle School, Claireville Junior School and, in fact, 22 schools in my riding have benefited from these particular grants. Given the knowledge-based economy of tomorrow, I believe that the Parents Reaching Out Grants are a key part of Ontario's family engagement strategy, and this is embedded throughout the goals of our renewed Vision for Education in Ontario.

Minister, would you please elaborate on what projects are included and how you envision they will benefit children's education in Ontario?

Hon. Liz Sandals: The Parents Reaching Out Grants include funding for parent involvement committees and school councils, for local projects like family math nights, resources to welcome parents who are new to Ontario to learn about the Ontario education system—a whole host of things.

For example, for some of the projects that parents have chosen, we help parents with resources to help them support their children's learning: information on topics like bullying, child care, math homework, and the new health and phys-ed curriculum. We've made a lot of parent resources available, a lot of resources around online social networking safety and how to be safe on the Internet.

We know that when parents are engaged, their children do better. That's why we are encouraging parents to get involved in their children's education.

ACCESSIBLE PARKING PERMITS

Mrs. Gila Martow: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Last year, over 1,000 counterfeit accessible parking permits were confiscated in Toronto—up by 28% in just one year. Apparently, motorists are able to easily access or create these fake permits. This government's response was to tighten up security on newly issued permits only.

Mr. Speaker, I would like the minister to explain how bar codes on new permits will help to alleviate fraud, since the old permits, which are easily counterfeited, are still accepted until they expire.

Hon. David Oraziatti: I appreciate the question. I think the member knows full well the importance of these permits to Ontarians and to those who need them and need access to these spaces in Ontario. The last thing we want to see is anyone counterfeiting or fraudulently using these types of permits in Ontario. We think that is a despicable practice, for somebody to fraudulently take a permit and take a spot or a space from someone who has a disability or needs to have that type of access.

On this side of the House, we're concerned about that issue. We're taking steps within our government and our ministry to tighten up the security of these permits, to make them tougher to counterfeit. That was the purpose of the announcement. That's what we're aiming to do.

We're going to continue to work with the accessibility community, to continue to make these permits stronger for Ontarians and to reduce fraud that's out there in the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much. My question really didn't address the fact that we're trying to tighten up security. I mentioned that we're tightening up security. My question is, why aren't we tightening up security on the existing permits, and not just waiting for those permits to expire?

Mr. Speaker, thousands of Ontarians, we know, struggle with mobility issues. Many face additional burdens when accessible parking is taken up by these fraudsters. When designated spots are unavailable, motorists with permits are sometimes allowed to park in no-parking or no-stopping zones.

Unfortunately, our accessible parking rules vary from municipality to municipality, resulting in much confusion. For example, Thornhill resident Michelle Zaldin

received a ticket in the city of Vaughan for parking with a permit in an area that's acceptable in Toronto.

I'd like to know if the minister plans to streamline accessible parking regulations so that Ontario residents struggling with mobility challenges don't need to carry with them a copy of every municipality's parking regulations.

Hon. David Orazietti: I appreciate the supplementary question. As the member knows, we've taken a number of steps to increase the security measures and increase fines related to this. I'm certainly happy to take any suggestions that the member may have back to the ministry to review them, and to work with the member opposite to continue to raise the standard in how we protect consumers and those individuals with accessibility needs in Ontario.

I should remind the member, and I think the member knows, that not all of these disabilities in individuals are visible disabilities. We need to make sure that the permits are provided for individuals who need them in Ontario. I'm committed to working with the member opposite to do all that we can to strengthen these provisions for individuals who need these permits.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on a point of order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I just want to remind everybody that the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition is having a reception in room 230. I recommend all members to drop by.

VISITORS

Mr. Tim Hudak: I want to call members' attention to a special guest who a number of us are having lunch with shortly. We're joined by Assemblyman Walter Mosley. He's a Democratic assemblyman representing Brooklyn for the state of New York. And of course, a very familiar face as well: He is joined by Avi Benlolo, the executive director of the Simon Wiesenthal foundation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome to the Legislature.

DEFERRED VOTES

HEALTH INFORMATION PROTECTION ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA PROTECTION DES RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LA SANTÉ

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 119, An Act to amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, to make certain related amendments and to repeal and replace the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, 2004 / Projet de loi 119, Loi visant à modifier la Loi de 2004 sur la protection des renseignements personnels sur la santé, à apporter

certaines modifications connexes et à abroger et à remplacer la Loi de 2004 sur la protection des renseignements sur la qualité des soins.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members, please take your seats.

On September 16, 2015, Mr. Hoskins moved second reading of Bill 119. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Miller, Norm
Anderson, Granville	French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Paul
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Moridi, Reza
Arnott, Ted	Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Gretzky, Lisa	Murray, Glen R.
Baker, Yvan	Hardeman, Ernie	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Balkissoon, Bas	Harris, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Ballard, Chris	Hoggarth, Ann	Natyshak, Taras
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	Nicholls, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Orazietti, David
Bisson, Gilles	Hudak, Tim	Potts, Arthur
Bradley, James J.	Hunter, Mitzie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brown, Patrick	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Chan, Michael	Jones, Sylvia	Sandals, Liz
Chiarelli, Bob	Kiwala, Sophie	Sattler, Peggy
Clark, Steve	Lalonde, Marie-France	Scott, Laurie
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Crack, Grant	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Damerla, Dipika	MacLeod, Lisa	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Tabuns, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Mantha, Michael	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Martins, Cristina	Taylor, Monique
Dickson, Joe	Martow, Gila	Vanthof, John
DiNovo, Cheri	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daiene
Dong, Han	Mauro, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Fedeli, Victor	McMahon, Eleanor	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fife, Catherine	McMeekin, Ted	Yakabuski, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yurek, Jeff
Forster, Cindy	Milczyn, Peter Z.	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 93; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the justice committee, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Referred to the justice committee. Carried.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nickel Belt on a point of order.

M^{me} France Gélinas: A point of order, Speaker: This morning, as I was talking to the motion on concurrence in supply, I said there were 69 layoffs in Windsor. It was 169 nurses being laid off in Windsor. I made a mistake.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Just a record correction, Mr. Speaker: At one point, I meant to say 608,000 net new jobs created since the recession. For some reason, I think I said 280,000, which wasn't even close. That's why the Premier was looking at me funny, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And on that note, I do want to bring to everyone's attention that when you correct the record, you only correct the record. In the last little while, until today—I'm glad it happened the way it did today—there were people making editorials or making comments or debate. That's not the purpose of correcting one's record. So we will stay focused on correcting one's record.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1150 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: While they have not joined us yet, there are a number of representatives from our first responders who will be joining us in the House regarding the PTSD announcement. One is from the Orangeville Police Services Board. I would like to welcome James Giovannetti.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

2016 CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL AUTO SHOW

Mr. Michael Harris: Ladies and gentlemen, start your engines. As the final weekend of the 2016 Canadian auto show revs up with a tribute to the 100th running of the Indy 500, a celebration of this great race and the Canadians who have fought for victory there, a collection of nine cars from the Indianapolis Motor Speedway museum will be on hand, including Jacques Villeneuve's 1995 Indy winner, the Reynard 95i, and the Lola Mackenzie Financial No. 15 car that Scott Goodyear rode to his second-place Indy finish in 1992.

Of course, while the century-old race provides the backdrop, this year's show features many of the favourites that auto show fans look forward to each and every year. More than 1,000 cars, trucks, SUVs, concept cars and motorcycles are featured among the 65,000 square feet of exhibits, displays and attractions at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

Visitors with a taste for the exotic car can check out the Auto Exotica display, featuring \$25-million worth of cars, including Rolls Royce, McLaren, Ferrari, Maserati, Bentley and the Aston Martin.

To top it all off, a very special guest appearance will be made tomorrow, as the Batmobile escapes Gotham

and touches down in Toronto for a star-studded day and dark night.

I encourage auto and superhero fans alike to fire up those engines, bundle up the family and head down to the Metro Toronto Convention Centre for our country's largest consumer show, the 2016 Canadian International Auto Show.

HOSPITAL INFECTION CONTROL

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to rise today to talk about a recent visit I made to an innovative company in Waterloo region, Class 1. Barry Hunt, president and CEO of Class 1, is with us today in the members' gallery.

Class 1 makes equipment to recapture anaesthetic gases vented by hospitals, helping them to reduce carbon emissions. It started off as a small business in Barry's basement in 1995 and hasn't stopped growing since then.

They have taken on a new challenge: fighting hospital-acquired infections. Some 80,000 Ontarians are infected every year in hospital; 4,000 of them die; every 42 seconds another Ontarian is infected; every two hours another patient dies.

Hospital-acquired infections, or HAIs, are the third-leading cause of death in Canada, responsible for more deaths every year than car accidents, breast cancer and HIV combined. These deaths are preventable.

Class 1 is working to reduce hospital infections by 80% by 2024. They have developed technology that will break the chain of infection by scouring the surfaces of hospital rooms with ultraviolet light to kill hidden bacteria.

The estimated direct cost of these preventable infections is \$20,000 per case, or \$1.5 billion, in Ontario every year. The cost of prevention is far lower than the cost of treating patients who are unnecessarily infected. I'm hopeful that the upcoming 2016 budget will reflect this much-needed and important investment in our health care sector.

HIGH-SPEED RAIL

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Recently, in my riding of Kitchener Centre, we had a visit by the Honourable David Collenette, Ontario's recently appointed special adviser on high-speed rail. He came with a team of policy experts from the Ministry of Transportation on a fact-finding mission to hear local voices offer their input, ideas and expectations on advancing the province's visionary plan to build a high-speed rail network in the Windsor-to-Toronto corridor.

We had municipal leaders there, representatives from the tech sector, manufacturing, academia, financial services, and environmental groups. We heard outstanding feedback from these people. The round-table sessions ran about two hours. Let me offer you some of the highlights.

As we brand ourselves in Waterloo region as Silicon Valley North, we need faster and more frequent rail service tied to our economic development. Those trains

need to flow in all directions. This is going to help us to attract the talent we need to keep innovating and creating jobs. And it needs to connect with our light rail transit system which is now under construction.

Mr. Speaker, all around the globe, you will find high-speed trains servicing the public—in Spain, China, Austria, the UK, Italy, South Korea and even Uzbekistan.

We know that we have the know-how here in Ontario and, now, with a willing federal partner, we have the political will to stay on track with this ambitious plan to bring high-speed rail to the people of Ontario.

IVAN MATER

Mr. Robert Bailey: I rise today to recognize the passing of Mr. Ivan Mater on February 16, 2016, just 10 days after celebrating his 96th birthday. Beloved husband of the late Belle Mater, Ivan was a loving father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

After working on the family farm and across the Prairies during the Depression, Ivan joined the Royal Canadian Navy in 1941 and served until 1945, crossing the Atlantic 30 times, which was quite extraordinary in those days.

He met Belle in Belfast, Ireland, during the war, and they were married in Inwood in 1946.

Following the war, Ivan embarked on a career in construction in Sarnia. Over a four-decade period, he built homes, apartment buildings, Sarnia General Hospital, commercial buildings and industrial parks.

Ivan was a long-time member of the Progressive Conservative Party locally, the Golden K Kiwanis, Central Baptist Church, the committee of adjustment for the city of Sarnia, the Sarnia Legion, the Sarnia Lakeview Cemetery board, and many others. He was also active with the Shriners Mocha temple. He recently received his 70-year membership pin in the Masonic order, and was a recipient of the John Ross Matheson Award from the Scottish Rite of Canada for service in 2012, and the 2012 Queen's jubilee medal.

Always active, Ivan enjoyed dancing and gardening. He once led a project to plant over a hundred American sweet chestnut trees throughout southwestern Ontario.

I am thankful that I had the privilege to call Ivan Mater a good friend for so many years.

My deepest condolences to his loved ones. Ivan will be dearly missed by his family and the broader community of Sarnia-Lambton.

GOODWILL INDUSTRIES

Ms. Cindy Forster: I rise today to remind members of this House of the plight of hundreds of hard-working families affected by Goodwill Industries' decision to close their stores earlier this year.

On January 18, without warning, Goodwill Industries closed all of its 16 stores in Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton, Newmarket, Barrie, Orillia and Brockville, putting hundreds of people out of work.

As the labour critic, it's both alarming and disheartening to know that our government has done nothing to get to the bottom of what led to hundreds of Goodwill employees in these communities being out on the street without warning.

Goodwill received millions in revenue in 2014 and at least \$4 million a year from the province. The CEO, whose decision it was to shut down operations, citing a fiscal crisis, makes well over \$230,000 a year. Meanwhile, the almost 500 affected employees, the lowest-paid workers, probably, in this province, those who need our help most—their livelihoods rely on these Goodwill stores staying open. They depend on their government, and all they've gotten so far is silence and inaction.

These workers are dedicated. They've worked hard for Goodwill. The stores were pillars of their communities. They're being thrown out of work without notice, and that's devastating to them.

The government's silence and inaction on this issue is unacceptable, in my opinion, so I stand here today with New Democrats, and I urge all members of this House to do the same thing, and get some action to get these people back to work.

ORGAN DONATION

DON D'ORGANES

Mr. John Fraser: As we approach the end of Kindness Week, I'd like to encourage all Ontarians to think about how we can be generous to the people around us. One of the kindest acts a person can do is consent to the Trillium Gift of Life Network.

Consentir au Réseau Trillium pour le don de vie est un des actes les plus généreux qu'une personne peut faire.

Organ donation is an important decision that should be carefully considered. There are currently 1,620 Ontarians waiting for a transplant. Every organ donation can save up to eight lives.

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By making the decision to donate, a person gives hope to patients waiting for a life-saving or life-enhancing transplant. In my riding of Ottawa South, over 36,000 residents have consented to donate their organs. I am proud to represent such a generous community. There is still room for improvement.

I'd like to encourage my colleagues to remind their community about the importance of organ donation through their householders and other correspondence. Encouraging this meaningful act of kindness could make a world of difference to someone in their lives and someone in their communities.

Promouvoir cet acte généreux pourrait faire toute la différence pour quelqu'un dans notre communauté et pour leur famille.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Julia Munro: I want to take this opportunity to express some concerns about the Ontario pension plan.

Of course, we all want Ontarians to have a secure and stable retirement. However, I feel it's important to bring up for consideration some of the following situations.

What if you are an 18-year-old student working part-time at a store to help pay for university? You pay into the ORPP, once fully implemented. You attend teachers' college and become a teacher at 25. What happens to the eight years of previous contributions?

What if you work part-time at a local coffee shop to help pay for college? At 30, you move to Vancouver for a new job opportunity. You stay in Vancouver and retire there. What happens to the 13 years you contributed?

What if you pay into the Ontario pension for a few years and then land a job with a great pension? How does that impact your contributions?

There are many questions that are yet to be answered about the Ontario pension plan, or questions where the answers seem to change. Is the ORPP portable? If yes, how will that work? If your spouse outlives you, will they get a benefit?

Perhaps most concerning: What if your employer can't afford the ORPP and you lose your job? At the end of the day, if you don't have a job, you don't have a pension.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to speak today on the recent trade mission to India. I was fortunate to be among the delegates that joined Premier Kathleen Wynne on this successful and important trip. It was an incredible experience—one that has not only strengthened Ontario's ties with a valuable trade partner but also strengthened vital cultural ties.

Over the course of 10 days, 65 agreements were signed with a value of more than \$240 million, including the creation of more than 150 jobs in our province. As our business ties continue to grow, so will those job numbers. As the Premier puts it, we're building a brain-chain between India and Ontario.

India is an emerging market and trips like these create valuable opportunities for Ontario businesses, but it was also an incredible cultural experience. India is a beautiful country, and we were welcomed with open arms. I was lucky enough to be invited to lay a wreath at the grave of the great Mahatma Gandhi, a moment that was both humbling and unforgettable for me. In addition, I was also fortunate to visit the Golden Temple and to see important projects on the ground for women's issues. It was truly a humbling experience.

I'm so thankful to have had the opportunity to join the trade mission to India. Thank you so much for letting me speak, Mr. Speaker.

CLASSY LANE STABLES TRAINING CENTRE

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: On a cold winter's night on January 4, a neighbour of the Classy Lane Stables Training Centre in the township of Puslinch spotted flames in

one of the five barns. After calling 911, he stood helplessly with others, unable to rescue the 43 racehorses inside because of thick black smoke and flames. Firefighters from five departments, including my neighbouring community of Cambridge, were called to the blaze. The fire marshal is still investigating the cause.

The loss has devastated the horse racing community. Dan Lagace from Cambridge was working with seven horses that were housed at the Classy Lanes stables. He rushed to the scene, but said he was helpless as the building that contained his livelihood and beloved horses was engulfed in flames. The deaths of the 43 racehorses are more than just a professional catastrophe; it's like losing family members, many said. About 20 people lost their jobs, and a GoFundMe site was set up. It has raised over \$500,000 to assist them.

I phoned owner Barb Millier, who was very grateful for the call from Premier Wynne, and to many others for their tributes and donations to those who've lost jobs. Agricultural and rural affairs Minister Leal visited the farm and his staff worked with the owners after the fire.

At an evening vigil, I joined horse lovers, employees and firefighters to remember the horses that perished and the human lives that were impacted.

Thank you to all those who have reached out to those affected by this terrible loss.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 63(c), the supplementary estimates 2015-16 of the Office of the Assembly before the Standing Committee on Estimates are deemed to be passed by the committee, and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Pursuant to standing order 62(c), the supplementary estimates 2015-16 of the Office of the Assembly, not having been selected for consideration, are deemed to be concurred in.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SUPPORTING ONTARIO'S FIRST RESPONDERS ACT (POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER), 2016

LOI DE 2016 D'APPUI AUX PREMIERS INTERVENANTS DE L'ONTARIO (ÉTAT DE STRESS POST-TRAUMATIQUE)

Mr. Flynn moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 163, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 and the Ministry of Labour Act with respect to posttraumatic stress disorder / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail et la Loi sur le ministère du Travail relativement à l'état de stress post-traumatique.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to rise today to introduce that bill. There are some people in our society, people who are first responders, who step to the front when we're going the other way. They are people who put out our fires and rescue people from car wrecks, people who deal with some quite violent situations and people who work in our correctional facilities. We owe them a lot more than we're providing at this point in time from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. What they've asked for is presumptive legislation. What I'm bringing forward today would accomplish just that.

BATTLE OF THE HATPINS DAY ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE JOUR DE LA BATAILLE DES ÉPINGLES À CHAPEAUX

M^{me} Gélinas propose la première lecture du projet de loi suivant :

Bill 164, An Act to proclaim Battle of the Hatpins Day / Projet de loi 164, Loi proclamant le Jour de la bataille des épingles à chapeaux.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm curious for the member's explanatory notes. The member for a short statement.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Le projet de loi proclame le 29 janvier de chaque année le Jour de la bataille des épingles à chapeaux. C'est le 29 janvier 1916 qu'un groupe de femmes a réussi à empêcher les inspecteurs scolaires d'entrer dans leur école et de la fermer, puisque le règlement 17 empêchait l'enseignement du français en Ontario.

The bill proclaims January 29 in each year as Battle of the Hatpins Day.

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On January 29, 1916, many women pushed back school inspectors from entering the school of their children by using the pins from their hats. By doing this, the inspectors were not allowed to come in and shut their school down under regulation 17, which did not allow the teaching of French in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. I've now been taught something.

PETITIONS

HOME INSPECTION INDUSTRY

Mr. Han Dong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the home inspector industry remains largely unregulated; and

"Whereas homeowners are increasingly reliant on home inspectors to make an educated home purchase; and

"Whereas the unregulated industry poses a risk to consumers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To protect consumers by regulating the home inspection industry and licensing home inspectors."

I support this petition and I'll sign it.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to page Sayeem.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition here that was sent—I've had several of these from across Ontario, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in ... Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in

direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on ... private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite" its progress through third reading and finally "to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I agree with the petition, affix my signature and give it to page Owen.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a very heavy petition here, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I'm happy to affix my signature.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that has been collected by Christine Mathieu, who lives in Gogama, in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Gogama Highway 661 Maintenance

"Whereas Highway 661 is a three-kilometre secondary highway which links the town of Gogama to Highway 144 and is in extremely poor condition throughout the entire winter season; and

"Whereas Highway 661 is an essential highway which all emergency vehicles, school buses and other vehicles, including snowplows, must travel into and out of the community daily; and

"Whereas the low standard of winter maintenance of this highway, always snow-packed and icy, creates a

serious public safety issue, putting at risk the lives of the area residents."

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Increase the winter maintenance standard for this single-access highway into Gogama to ensure that the residents have safer access to their home community."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Bianca to bring it to the Clerk.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I agree with this petition, will affix my name and send it to the table with page Richard.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I wholeheartedly agree and send the petition down with page Luke.

PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

M. Shafiq Qaadri: J'ai une pétition ici, adressée à l'Assemblée législative, pour l'élimination des microbilles dans les produits cosmétiques.

« Attendu que les microbilles sont de petites particules de plastique de moins de 1 mm de diamètre, qui passent à travers nos systèmes de filtration de l'eau et sont présentes dans nos rivières et dans les Grands Lacs;

« Attendu que la présence de ces microbilles dans les Grands Lacs augmente et qu'elles contribuent à la pollution par le plastique de nos lacs et rivières d'eau douce;

« Attendu que la recherche scientifique et les données recueillies jusqu'à présent révèlent que les microbilles qui sont présentes dans notre système d'alimentation en eau stockent des toxines, que des organismes confondent ces microbilles avec des aliments et que ces microbilles peuvent se retrouver dans notre chaîne alimentaire;

« Nous, les soussignés, présentons une pétition à l'Assemblée législative aux fins suivantes :

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« Mandater le gouvernement de l'Ontario pour qu'il interdise la création et l'ajout de microbilles aux produits cosmétiques et à tous les autres produits de santé et de beauté connexes et demander au ministère de l'Environnement d'effectuer une étude annuelle des Grands Lacs pour analyser les eaux et déceler la présence de microbilles. »

Je vous l'envoie avec page Micah.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads:

"Whereas once you privatize Hydro One, there's no return; and

"Whereas we'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"Whereas we'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"Whereas we'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerks' table via page Charlotte.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

It's signed by many people throughout my riding, and I'm happy to hand it to page Richard.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that is signed by Mrs. Valerie Hawkings from Long Lake Road in my riding, and it reads as follows:

"Petition about intercity transportation

"Whereas the residents of northern Ontario, particularly people who are sick or elderly, depend on public transportation for appointments in southern Ontario;

"Whereas intercity bus routes have been eliminated by Greyhound, for example, all daytime routes between Sudbury and Ottawa; and

"Whereas there have been serious reductions at Ontario Northland, including the elimination of Northland's train services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: Ensure that Ontario Northland offers adequate and equitable intercity transportation service from northern to southern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Micah to bring it to the Clerk.

TAXATION

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Stop the Carbon Tax petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and

households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

“Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

“Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

“Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses.”

Again, it's signed by many people from my riding. I'll hand it to page Delaney.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled, “Hydro One not for sale!” It reads:

“Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

“Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

“Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

“Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One.”

I support this petition fully, affix my name to it and send it to the table.

PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

M. Shafiq Qaadri: J'ai une pétition ici sur l'élimination des microbilles des produits cosmétiques adressée à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

« Attendu que les microbilles sont de petites particules de plastique de moins de 1 mm de diamètre, qui passent à travers nos systèmes de filtration de l'eau et sont présentes dans nos rivières et dans les Grands Lacs;

« Attendu que la présence de ces microbilles dans les Grands Lacs augmente et qu'elles contribuent à la pollution par le plastique de nos lacs et rivières d'eau douce;

« Attendu que la recherche scientifique et les données recueillies jusqu'à présent révèlent que les microbilles

qui sont présentes dans notre système d'alimentation en eau stockent des toxines, que des organismes confondent ces microbilles avec des aliments et que ces microbilles peuvent se retrouver dans notre chaîne alimentaire;

« Nous, les soussignés, présentons une pétition à l'Assemblée législative aux fins suivantes :

« Mandater le gouvernement de l'Ontario pour qu'il interdise la création et l'ajout de microbilles aux produits cosmétiques et à tous les autres produits de santé et de beauté connexes et demander au ministère de l'Environnement d'effectuer une étude annuelle des Grands Lacs pour analyser les eaux et déceler la présence de microbilles. »

Je vous l'envoie avec page Jessie.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

SAVING THE GIRL NEXT DOOR ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA SAUVEGARDE DES JEUNES FILLES

Ms. Scott moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 158, An Act to enact the Human Trafficking Awareness Day Act, 2016 and the Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act, 2016 and to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 158, Loi édictant la Loi de 2016 sur la Journée de sensibilisation à la traite de personnes et la Loi de 2016 sur l'exploitation sexuelle d'enfants et la traite de personnes et modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Tuesday was no ordinary day for me. It wasn't an ordinary day at Queen's Park and it wasn't an ordinary day in the Legislature. In fact, Tuesday was a special day—one of the finest days I've had in my 10 years here serving as a member of provincial Parliament. It was one of my most extraordinary days, in fact.

We all take pride in the work we do on behalf of all Ontarians in our ways and in different efforts. We work hard each and every day to make a difference in all the details that it may take. But on Tuesday, February 16, it was that much more. It is the day I stood in the House and introduced my private member's bill to take a direct hit at the underground world of human trafficking.

The Saving the Girl Next Door Act, 2016, may hold the legislative contents of this bill, but it is truly the representation of the many long hours of dedication and commitment and pure sweat of a small, collaborative group—survivors, victim service providers, police officers and advocates—who fight this horrendous crisis every day. At this time, I would like to strongly thank, as

I acknowledge some honoured guests that we have in the gallery today for being here in support of this human trafficking bill: Cynthia Bland, the founder and CEO, and Simone Bell, speaker, experiential adviser and peer mentor, for Voice Found; Karyn Kennedy, president and CEO, and Lindsay Jolie, director of communications and community relations, for Boost Child and Youth Advocacy Centre; and Bridget Perrier, co-founder for Sextrade101. Please join me in welcoming our honoured guests.

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These devoted individuals, as well as others like Timea Nagy who couldn't be with us today, recount stories and tell about instances and events that make you shudder or just plain cry in an instant. Whether we pay attention as a society or not, these experiences are very real. They are horrifying, repressive and severely damaging.

Discussions, conversations and consultations paint the picture, but it is the actions that speak the loudest. I have served on the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment. I have called for the creation of the multi-jurisdictional and co-ordinated task force of law enforcement agencies, crown prosecutors, judges, victim services and front-line agencies so that we can do more.

We know the facts. Human trafficking is an underground and fast-growing crime. It starts in Canada and it stays in Canada. Over 90% of the victims are Canadian-born. It's in our neighbourhoods, our communities and our towns. Victims are predominantly girls and are as young as 11 years old. Traffickers recruit, transport, harbour and control the very girl next door for sexual exploitation or forced labour. They are lured into a nightmare that they can almost never escape from on their own.

Ontario specifically has been identified as a major hub of human trafficking. Cities and towns along the Highway 401 corridor such as London, Toronto, Kingston and Ottawa provide an accessible thoroughfare for traffickers to transport victims and keep them isolated. Traffickers range in profile from lone individuals to complex criminal networks.

Enough is enough. It is time to take immediate action and it's time to save the next innocent soul before they become a statistic.

The Saving the Girl Next Door Act is specifically intended to have three main parts: continuous education and awareness; immediate action—immediate, I say again—to expand existing laws; and immediate action to enhance existing law.

First, the bill proclaims every February 22 as a day of awareness of human trafficking, as it marks the date in 2007 when Canada's Parliament unanimously condemned all forms of human trafficking and slavery. Ontario must follow suit.

Second, the Saving the Girl Next Door Act will expand current laws to evoke an immediate impact. It will allow the courts to make a protection order against a perpetrator of human trafficking or child exploitation. A

protection order—similar to a restraining order—would force the trafficker to stay away from the survivor for a minimum of three years. If a trafficker breaches that protection order, they would face a penalty of up to \$50,000 or up to two years of jail or both.

There is also a new tort that will allow a survivor to sue their trafficker for damages. There are devastating effects of human trafficking, and recovery is emotionally and financially difficult. It may serve as a measure of justice.

Third, the bill pushes public awareness of traffickers through the enhancement of current legislation. It will expand the definition of "sex offence" under Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000, to include offences related to the trafficking or purchasing of the sexual services of persons under the age of 18.

Manitoba has shown us the way. Their provincial Legislature not only has passed its own law on human trafficking with emphasis on protection orders; they have invested the financial resources to enforce it.

Notably, one of Canada's leading experts in human trafficking and sexual exploitation is Joy Smith, a former MP for Kildonan—St. Paul in Manitoba, who now dedicates her life's work to its eradication through the Joy Smith Foundation. Mrs. Smith has put her full support behind this bill, stating, "I applaud Laurie Scott for this excellent Bill 158, Saving the Girl Next Door Act. It will save lives. It is very innovative and demonstrates the extraordinary leadership Ms. Scott has displayed in this area of human trafficking."

The bill is action now. While continued discussion, consultation, collaboration and legislation are required to end human trafficking—colleagues, Tuesday may have been an extraordinary day, but the undertaking is not complete. Please join me, everyone in this Legislature, all parties, all sides, in lending unanimous consent to this bill. We owe it to our honoured guests who are with us in the gallery. We owe it to the front-line workers, survivors and advocates who combat this horrific crime every day. And we owe it to the girl next door.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour to rise, always, in this Legislature, and it's particularly an honour for my colleague from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock and this bill.

She's modest. When she talks about the Girl Next Door Act—I want to tell you a story about a girl next door who would, in fact, be helped by this bill. Obviously I'm changing her name. A young girl, she was 14 at the time and new to high school. She was shown some extra attention by a high school senior, a young man in grade 12. She was, of course, just flattered to get his attention. This is called, by the way, the Romeo pimp syndrome and it's not unusual.

Anyway, he shows her attention. They date. The next thing you know, he's inviting her out to parties. There are drugs involved. She's experimenting with drugs in a way that she probably wouldn't have done otherwise.

The next thing she knows, he's telling her, "Would you go to a party for me? It's all older guys. Don't worry about it. It's a good party, great music, lots of drugs. You don't have to pay for anything." She goes, not knowing that he's actually charged the men for her presence.

This young woman gets more involved in drugs, and addicted to methedrine. Now she has to go to the parties. Now she's also getting extra money for extra sex work that she's doing at the parties.

She is a victim of human trafficking. He goes on; she has no idea, of course. He moves on. She doesn't know until they break up that there were many other girls working for this same young man. Doing this, he makes tens of thousands of dollars.

This is something that is happening across our province. Quite frankly, I was unaware that it was as extensive as it is. This is something that is happening in just about every high school in some areas, Ms. Scott has pointed out. This is something that is happening to girls we may know, or whose families we definitely know.

This is not, as one would first think when you hear about human trafficking, importing—but it is as well, of course—women from other countries who don't have cultural capital and can't speak the language, forcing them to work in so-called massage parlours. That goes on as well.

But this is also about, just as the bill is named, the girls next door, the Canadian girls. Some 90%, as the member has said, were born right here. It's shocking, it's horrific and it's real. It's happening.

Now, I have to say, I did speak to the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock about this, and we were very concerned about some of the federal moves around sex trade work like Bill C-36. We hope the new government rescinds that bill because, in fact, it denies protection for sex workers who actually choose that profession, who are adult women or adult men who choose that profession. That's an entirely different topic. That's an entirely different subject. That's an entirely different debate.

This is about children. At the end of the day, this is about our children. That's who we're speaking about here. If you look through all the provisions of this, you'll see that all but one specify "under 18 years." One of the concerns we had, in fact, is that in the preamble it says "19 years." I just throw that out to the member. She may want to look at the age in that bill.

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But apart from that there's nothing here that, of course, we in the New Democratic Party would not support. We do support it. It's interesting: I just came from the announcement for PTSD, which as many of you know I've been working on for seven years now. So I came from a room full of first responders—police, paramedics, fire—and this is a bill also for them—for the victims, but also for them, to give them the tools they need because they don't know what to do and they don't have the resources to do it. This is a first step towards addressing that wrong as well.

In a sense it's a shame we couldn't have moved them all in here because they would have heard this bill and they would have been supportive of it, because they see it—and they see it a lot. It's shocking. It's happening. It's in our midst. It is the girl next door. I just want to, again, give kudos, as she's become quite a champion on this issue—it's such a long name; I want to say Ms. Scott but I'm going to say Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock again; a lovely area, just a long name—for her actions on this and her tireless championing of it.

It's always good to see members of this House who take on something and really go to town on it and do not stop until they get action from the government. To my friends on the other side of the aisle, I hope that you are listening and that you do take action on this, because it's critical and it will save lives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I'll be speaking as the minister responsible for women's issues on this bill. I'm pleased to rise to speak on this very serious issue of human trafficking, an area that I think we all agree needs more attention. I think we all agree that human traffickers prey on our most vulnerable citizens, often very young people.

I think it's important, and I'm going to shift to my other role as the Minister of Children and Youth Services, to acknowledge that human trafficking does not just target women and young girls. It targets boys and young men. I think that as we go forward in this we need to acknowledge that. I'm glad to see my critic from the opposition party for children and youth services is here, because many young boys are also victims of human trafficking.

But first I want to thank the member for bringing the bill forward and I'm very pleased to say our government will be supporting the bill. I want to thank her for her work on this bill and on the select committee. The Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment made a few specific recommendations regarding human trafficking. We have lots of voices on the human trafficking agenda; we have a permanent round table on violence against women, which is part of our government sexual violence and harassment action plan called It's Never Okay; and of course the many stakeholders. I acknowledge the people who are here today and acknowledge your tireless work. Your voices are incredibly important to this conversation about human trafficking.

I do want to say—and I won't say everything I want to say because I'm going to share my time with others—that there is definitely a need, Speaker, for more coordination of information within and between governments and local organizations. We need to take a very holistic approach to combating human trafficking. The front-line organizations and the supporters of survivors and the advocates are equally important in all of this.

As the Premier mentioned this morning in question period, and I think in an announcement last week, I'll be co-leading the government's work on an advisory panel

co-led by my colleague Minister Naqvi, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. That work will build on work that's already going on. It will build on investments that are being made. We currently have \$456 million in funding to address gender-based and other violence in Ontario. So we're not starting from scratch, Speaker. It's important to build on our success and look at what has been working.

Because my co-chair is not here, I just want to briefly touch on a couple of things more on the policing side, if I could, Speaker, and our work with the federal government.

We are participating in the Joint Working Group on Violence Against Aboriginal Women subcommittee on human trafficking, which is a federal, provincial and territorial working group. Police forces across the province continue to work with the RCMP and the Canadian Border Services Agency to address human trafficking.

I also want to acknowledge Durham Regional Police Service, where I live and where the member who brought this bill forward lives—or partially lives in Durham, right?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I partially have it in my riding.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: She's partially in Durham. I know she's reached out to them as well. Durham Regional Police Service coordinated the first anti-human-trafficking initiative in Ontario, known as Operation Northern Spotlight. It involved 26 police services. It was so successful that it led to a second operation, coordinated by the OPP, involving 29 police services from across the country. I applaud Durham Regional Police Service for their work, and all police forces across Ontario will need to play a role in addressing human trafficking going forward.

It's also important to note that the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services has used the Proceeds of Crime Front Line Policing Grant to provide \$1.5 million in funding to 12 projects to help police services combat human trafficking. That helps the police with special investigations; educational campaigns for victims and witnesses; increased surveillance; improved officer training, which I'm very supportive of; and human trafficking investigation.

Speaker, there is a lot more to say. I know my colleagues will be speaking to this bill as well. Again, I want to congratulate the member for bringing this forward, thank her for her work on the subcommittee and thank the guests here today. Together, I believe we can address this serious issue. We have to make sure that our most vulnerable people, who are affected by human trafficking, don't get caught in this. We have to support them, we have to prevent this and we have to take action against those who commit this horrible crime.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a great honour to join the debate today on the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock's bill.

In our legislative career, we often end up focusing on a few issues that we become very passionate about. I

really want to thank the member for all of her work on human trafficking. It's not an easy subject. It's not an easy issue for people to comprehend. We've already had some comments about how when you say "human trafficking," people often think about bringing young men and women from outside of the country. In fact, we're learning that that is not the case. The majority of them are domestic or girl-next-door.

The front-line people who are helping survivors, who have been experiencing this first-hand—I want to talk specifically about a police officer who, many years ago, was involved in trying to assist some young women from his community who had been caught in the web of human trafficking.

He became a de facto air traffic controller to try to figure out and reach out to his support network of where he could go—because the traditional methods didn't work. You can't take a survivor who has been involved in human trafficking and drop them off at the local transition place or women's shelter. It doesn't work. The model is not successful. He essentially built a whole network of people he could call on to get assistance in the middle of the night when he was trying to help these people.

1400

At the end of it—I wish I had brought them—he had little business cards made up, because he is in the police service. One side said, "Here are the things that you need to look for if you suspect human trafficking." He used to hand those out to his fellow officers, often in other detachments and jurisdictions, because he found, when he spoke to other individuals—other people who were working in the front lines—that they didn't know what to look for; they didn't know what to watch for. They suspected things, but it was not an easy fix.

I really want to give a shout-out to the people who are assisting the survivors, because you were there when we as legislators were not paying attention. You built the model. When we were working on the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment, Laurie Scott—sorry, the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock—brought forward her suggestions and wanted to make sure that human trafficking was incorporated.

I was very pleased that one of the opportunities we had was to meet with the author and ask a lot of questions about a book called *Somebody's Daughter*, by Julian Sher. If you want to learn more—if you want to see the impact this has on our community—this is a really good place to start. We have opportunities in other jurisdictions, like Manitoba, that have been doing some excellent work, and I think we can capitalize on that.

I want to give credit where credit is due: The minister stood up and is participating in a debate on a private member's bill. I think that speaks volumes to the fact that she is taking this issue seriously. I appreciate that, and I want to congratulate her on that. I think that sends the right message that this is an issue we can work on collaboratively.

As it turns out, I do actually have the indicators of human trafficking. I'm going to wrap up, because there

are a lot of people who want to speak, but just a couple things that people can look for if they suspect it: Is the victim in possession of identification or travel documents? If not, who is controlling them? Was the victim coached on what to say to law enforcement and immigration officers? There is some excellent work. We just need make sure that we coordinate it and share it among all of our law enforcement agencies and the individuals who are assisting survivors.

With that I will wrap up and say thank you for bringing this forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a real honour and a pleasure to rise today to speak in support of the private member's bill that is before us today, introduced by the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Like others in this House today, I want to add my congratulations to the member for her tireless advocacy on this issue. I had the privilege of working with the member on the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment. As occasionally happens in this House, sometimes we develop friendships across party lines, and those friendships are based on enormous respect for the passion and commitment that we bring to our work. I want to certainly acknowledge that, on behalf of my caucus.

During the select committee process, the stories we heard about human trafficking were among the most disturbing and the most shocking of the depositions that were brought to the committee. I do want to acknowledge the people who are here in the gallery today to witness this debate and who informed the private member's legislation that has been brought forward. Certainly, we were always reminded during the select committee process that it is vital to honour the voices of survivors, to respect the voices of survivors and to incorporate the expertise that survivors bring into legislation that we are bringing forward.

Although the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment looked at a number of different issues, we did highlight the issue of human trafficking as something that the government needs to take action on. The member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock has previously raised this issue in the House. I think this private member's bill before us today moves us one step closer to the comprehensive provincial strategy that is needed. I do want to acknowledge the efforts that the government is making to convene a round table to push this issue forward, as well.

I wanted to share with members today some of the testimony that we heard during the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment. This is from the interim report. We had a presentation from Legal Assistance of Windsor. The representative of that organization talked about one of the experiences of the clients whom they were working with who had been recruited into human trafficking.

The story goes that this young woman "was recruited by a friend over Facebook at 16 years old. She was told

by a girlfriend that she had met in a group home that the girl's boyfriend's friend liked her pictures and that he wanted to meet her. After texts and phone calls with the young man, she agreed to meet him. For over two months, she was forced to prostitute in cities across our province and service between seven and 10 men a day, seven days a week."

Speaker, this is the experience of a 16-year-old girl and, as the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock points out, many of the victims of human trafficking are recruited at very young ages, as young as 11 and potentially even earlier. Her bill, the Saving the Girl Next Door Act, certainly recognizes the risks to children by our failure to take action on the issue of human trafficking.

The bill has three components. The first is to declare February 22 as Human Trafficking Awareness Day. The second and the most substantive piece of this private member's bill is to enact the Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act, which will provide legal protections for children who are exploited by human traffickers. The third is to amend the sex offender registry act, so that those who are convicted of trafficking will be entered into the registry.

All of these issues are very important in moving us forward because, as we pointed out in the final report of the select committee, Ontario is a major hub for the global trade in human beings that we are seeing in human trafficking. It is an extraordinarily lucrative business that attracts criminals worldwide because, as the experience that I mentioned points out, unlike the drug trade, where criminals sell their illicit drugs and the drugs are gone once they're sold, with human trafficking, these girls, young women, young boys and aboriginal women can be sold over and over and over again.

The title of the bill, Saving the Girl Next Door Act, certainly does reflect the reality that many of the people who are recruited are from middle-class families. But we also have to acknowledge that human traffickers prey on the most vulnerable in our society. Many of them live in group homes; they are aboriginal children; they are indigenous women. There is a direct connection to missing and murdered indigenous women and the efforts that we need to make to understand the systemic barriers that led to the murders of those women.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's an absolute privilege to rise today on behalf of the citizens of Cambridge in support of Bill 158 and add a few comments to this very important debate in the House. I want to also acknowledge the members who have joined us in the gallery today to hear this debate and to hear how we are progressing in the province.

1410

It was an honour to be appointed to the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment. As other members of the committee who are speaking here today have said, we all joined together. This was an incredible

experience: to have all members of both sides of the House be really unanimous in our support of doing all we can to prevent sexual violence and harassment, including this very egregious crime of human trafficking.

Interestingly, the sexual violence action plan, Bill 132, is in front of the social policy committee just now. Members of that committee have just travelled across the province in order to hear public consultation regarding the action plan, but we did hear again about this burgeoning and growing issue of human trafficking.

Personally, I believe that this is an issue that we all need to really stand up and take notice of and to build awareness of. I fully believe that one act of violence against one woman is one act too many, and many of us do believe that. Preventing this crime in the first place is the most important thing. I believe that some of the recommendations that came forward in the select committee really look at doing that: educating our young people—girls and boys—not only on the presence of human trafficking but on sexual assault and consent issues in the first place.

As a parent, as a nurse and as a member of my community of Cambridge, I will add my voice to the others in this place and outside the chamber who are speaking up against this growing crime.

My riding straddles the 401. I now look at the hotels that are perched along that corridor in a different way. Hearing stories when we were sitting listening to survivors, listening to providers, about those trafficked women who are held hostage in hotels—probably in my community as well—is really horrifying. Interestingly, my own awareness has been raised in the last year or year and a half about the crime. Trafficked women and girls suffer. I've heard stories that girls and boys are micro-chipped. They cannot escape because there is a web around the hotel employees. Those who clean the rooms and those taxi drivers who come in and out are paid off by some of the pimps, some of the traffickers, so that if a girl happens to escape and gets into a cab, that cab will bring her around to the back door and return her to the trafficker.

This has to stop. This is one of the reasons why we do need a coordinated strategy to be able to stop these kinds of things. This could be my daughter, it could be my son and it could be yours. It could be the girl next door.

These bad actors, the ones who turn the other way, the ones who will not stand up and report the crimes, are the ones also who really need to take a lead role in their own community to prevent this from happening.

As a member of this government, I'm proud of the work that we're doing and proud of the work that we're doing concurrently; proud of the fact that all members on all sides of the House are standing up to try and eradicate sexual violence in Ontario and also human trafficking.

Our government will be continuing to take real steps to address human trafficking by working with community groups that are already on the ground, many of whom are here today and many of whom we heard from during our select committee. They'll be working closely with the

experts on the front lines to bring forward a comprehensive strategy. As we move forward, our approach will be survivor-centred. It'll be responsive to the needs on the ground. It'll focus on collaboration with other levels of government, community groups and justice partners.

It's important that we get this right. I look forward to seeing the comprehensive strategy that this government is bringing forward in June.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's a pleasure to join this debate today. I have very limited time so I won't go into some of the details, but I do want to thank the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and to congratulate her for bringing forth this piece of legislation.

I, like a lot of people, was shocked to learn just how close human trafficking is. Like most people, I thought it was out there but really never, ever came home and touched us here. She brought a lot of those issues to my attention, as she has to other people around this province.

I think a lot of it helped, when she was on the select committee dealing with sexual harassment, that she learned about so many of these stories. But learning about the stories is one thing; bringing them back here to the Legislature and taking some action is quite another. I must say that I've seen a lot of private members' bills in my 13 years here, and this private member's bill is probably one of the most comprehensive and well-thought-out pieces of legislation that I've had the pleasure of examining in my time here. It speaks to the commitment that she has to this issue, but it also speaks to the commitment we must have to this issue. This bill, while I'm confident it's going to pass second reading today, will amount to nothing if the government doesn't take further action in either bringing this bill further forward, or bringing forth some kind of comprehensive legislation on their own that will address this scourge of human trafficking.

This is something that's under the radar for most people. This is going to help to bring it out of the basement, so to speak, out of the closet, so that more people understand how perverse it is and why we must take immediate action on this issue. This bill is going to help that. I encourage all members of the House to support it today, but I say to the minister, the Premier and the cabinet: Move quickly on forms of legislation. Either back this bill up all the way to royal assent or move quickly on the reforms that will help our children never become victims of human trafficking.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: You know, you have a prepared speech, and you have four minutes to talk about this very important issue. Unfortunately, the time is running out for me. But I'm very happy to rise today in the House to share some of the comments that have been brought to light on this very important issue that was raised by the member opposite. I want to congratulate her for bringing this to the House today. I really appreciate this.

Once upon a time, I was a social worker. You hear stories throughout this process. I also had the great privilege of standing alongside members in the House today on the select committee. We did indeed hear about human trafficking.

One thing I would have to say, for me as a select committee member, is that the government is taking some action. One of them was raised and highlighted by the minister, where we are bringing forward a multi-ministerial advisory panel that will be co-led with Minister Naqvi and Minister MacCharles as a result of this wonderful initiative that we had as a select committee.

I know time is running out. I have all great things to say, but I want to salute and I wanted to at least stand up and say congratulations for bringing this bill forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I rise today to add to the discussion on Bill 158, the Saving the Girl Next Door Act. This is a very important topic, as we've all said here, and one that impacts every riding and community in this great province. I want to once again commend my colleague the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for bringing forward this piece of legislation. I hope that following the discussion here today, this government will prioritize the passing of Bill 158 in the same way it has prioritized other pieces of legislation. Most I don't view as nearly as important as this.

As I mentioned in previous remarks to the sexual violence and harassment action plan, the true extent of human trafficking is not fully known in Ontario or in local municipalities, as the signs that someone is being trafficked are not always recognized.

Anecdotally, in my own riding, in my constituency office, we assisted the mother of a young woman recently over the winter break, in a situation where the mother believed that her adult daughter was caught in this same vicious cycle of drug abuse and trafficking. I want to commend my staff and the local community support agencies of Sarnia-Lambton for helping to find the young woman in that situation assistance and the opportunity to try to break free from the violent, coercive grasp of traffickers.

The provisions in the Saving the Girl Next Door Act will assist authorities in our communities by giving them more tools to go after these traffickers. This is something that is needed and should be adopted immediately by this government. I want to commend again the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes for her continued work on this issue, and I want to thank all members of the Legislature who have added to this discussion.

1420

Just before I close, someone mentioned these hotels along the 401 and other places. There must be managers or owners of these hotels watching this show right now, and I'd ask them to take a good look in the mirror and question what's going in these facilities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Mr. Speaker, regardless of how painful this topic is, I want to say what a privilege it is to be able to rise today and make a few comments.

I was particularly moved by the title of the bill. I had a conversation with a group of mothers of teenage daughters, and I raised the issue of human trafficking because this was a group of people who live in the greater Toronto area and I felt that they should know. They just had no idea, and so I feel compelled to make a particular point about the title of the bill—because that's who we're talking about.

We have an awareness that is minuscule in comparison to the breadth and depth of the problem. So I want to congratulate my colleague the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock on her initiative.

Human trafficking is a modern form of slavery. When you look at the manner in which it has been organized—and people have referenced the tremendous inability of individuals to escape—it gives you some idea of bringing that meaning of human slavery back into our conversation.

My hope today is that not only will this bill pass but it will serve to spearhead a vigorous response to this crime that is just so damaging for the victims. I want to thank the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for bringing it forward today and allowing me to make a few comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

The member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm very touched by all the members who have spoken today: the member from Parkdale-High Park; the minister of women's issues—I do appreciate your being here; and the members from Dufferin-Caledon, London West, Cambridge, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Ottawa-Orléans, Sarnia-Lambton, York-Simcoe.

We have all, in this Legislature, heard the stories of human trafficking because we've spoken about it a lot; I specifically have. I appreciate my colleagues who have been on the select committee for the stories that they've heard outside of this Legislature. I think, from the stories that the members have told, we all know why we need to save the girl next door. This bill can take immediate action, and it has to be taken immediately before one more soul is taken into human trafficking.

I brought forward a motion of provincial networking of resources. We heard stories today of the patchwork of services. Some police services have human-trafficking-dedicated officers. Some victim services provide some services. It is a patchwork. It is not nearly enough. The guests I have in the gallery today are proof that they have taken such leadership.

I'm asking this government to take leadership now by implementing this bill, to take definitive actions, because we cannot waste any more time. June is not early enough. Pass this legislation. Let us protect some victims and

survivors now. Collectively, I know we can make a difference, and I know you want to make a difference.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I should inform the House that the vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 158 will take place after the private members' ballot items this afternoon.

LIFE LEASE ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LES BAUX VIAGERS

Ms. Hoggarth moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 160, An Act to regulate life leases / Projet de loi 160, Loi visant à réglementer les baux viagers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'm always honoured to stand here in the House before the Legislature and represent the voices of my constituents. Today is no different.

Confucius once said that the strength of a nation derives from the integrity of the home. This holds true today, and it speaks to the importance of establishing and maintaining quality housing for our seniors.

For decades now, the standard timeline of living was to work hard, purchase a home and take pride in maintaining it, and then to move into a retirement home until circumstances demand another move to a long-term-care facility. Much was lost in those relocations: a sense of independence, of community, and the feeling of belonging that comes with living in one place for a long time. The life lease option can make these senior transitions less traumatic.

What if, instead of moving several times when you're ready to downsize, you could move once and stay in that same place for decades? What if you didn't have to give up your independence to find somewhere more manageable to live? What if you could keep that sense of community and belonging that is so important to us, especially as we age?

Life leases are that missing link in our housing needs. In life leases, seniors can create a home all their own, without the difficult duties, tasks and expenses associated with home ownership. Usually residents do not have to deal with real estate problems, either.

The first life lease projects in Canada were built in the late 1970s and 1980s. There are now more than 300 lease projects across Canada, with about 135 currently in operation in Ontario alone. The majority of life lease projects in Canada are owned and operated by religious groups and other not-for-profit organizations. Nine out of 10 life leases operate well and are run with the residents' best interests in mind. I congratulate these groups for a job well done. However, this has not always proven to be the case.

Just as condo owners need protections, regulations are needed in order to ensure quality of housing and consumer protection for all life lease holders. In the ever-

expanding industry, and with an aging population, it's time for us to define in legislation what qualifies as a life lease and what guidelines must be set in place.

In my home riding of Barrie, I've had constituents reach out to me with concerns over how their life lease communities are run. In one instance, life lease holders saw their monthly fees increasing and the reserve funds for their complex decreasing in order to pay for the development and maintenance of another life lease project nearby. This is the sort of blatant misuse of reserve funds and disrespect for life lease holders that the legislation I am proposing today will help to prevent.

As legislators, it is our duty to protect the most vulnerable members of our population. In the golden years of their retirement, senior citizens who have done so much to build up this great province should not have to worry about keeping a hawk eye on the people to whom they entrust their money. Not only will this new bill define a life lease, but it will also set the standard for basic annual meetings between life lease sponsors and holders.

At these annual meetings, as with any other large investment, the sponsor will report to the life lease holders on the revenues and expenses of the complex for the preceding fiscal year. The sponsor will provide a detailed budget of the complex for the current fiscal year, and the sponsor will, of course, share with residents the balance of the complex's reserve funds. This annual meeting will ensure that life lease sponsors are held accountable to their holders and to the law, and will protect the investments senior citizens make when purchasing life leases.

1430

Another key aspect of the mandatory annual meeting between life lease sponsors and holders is that it will provide the life lease holders with a right to be heard. With this legislation, every life lease holder will be entitled to bring forward matters with the sponsor and to discuss those matters in the public forum of an annual meeting.

I want to return again for a moment, though, to the issue of life lease sponsors and the reserve funds they manage on behalf of the life lease holders. Shelter is one of the most basic human rights, but it isn't enough to simply provide a building for people to live in. These life lease complexes must be maintained for the security and happiness of all involved.

When a roof begins to leak, when a sidewalk crumbles or when an elevator stops working, it goes without saying that money will be needed to pay for these repairs, which is why having a reserve fund for life lease complexes is of paramount importance. This is why we must also legislate that it is a requirement for life lease sponsors to maintain a reserve fund to pay for any unforeseen major repairs or replacements of assets. This fund must be present at all times on and after the first occupancy date of the complex. An engaged residents' association could provide valuable oversight to ensure the facility's superintendent and staff are held to the same high standards as condominium managers.

Our senior citizens have spent their lives supporting their fellow Ontarians, and it is now our duty to return

the favour. Life lease complexes are not just a place for our seniors to live. They are more than the bricks and mortar of which they are made. These complexes allow our seniors to maintain their independence while enjoying fewer responsibilities—no more mowing the lawn or shovelling the snow.

Quite often, life leases are more affordable than owning and maintaining a house or condominium, and many life lease sponsors cover the costs of the property taxes. Many life lease projects also provide access to social and recreational programs, even care and meal services. But the real attraction of living in a life lease complex is the sense of community it provides for our seniors. This kind of sense of community keeps our seniors healthy. There's a peace of mind that comes from knowing there's always a neighbour nearby when you need a hand. Living in a community with people who share your background and your values can also provide great comfort in a rapidly changing world.

One of my constituents, a man whose parents were living in a life lease, spoke with us about the benefits of their experience and where there was room for improvement. The residents' investment in the unit is guaranteed and, as a result, they feel more secure in their financial stability. Without the fear that their rent or condo fees would unexpectedly be increased, they were able to prepare for the day when they would have to move on to long-term care.

Some seniors do not want to pay rent in an apartment building. As former homeowners who value an investment in property, they see renting as an unwise use of their money with very little return. Life leases help them to safely maintain their capital for the future.

My constituent also spoke highly of the amenities and the activities offered to his parents and their fellow residents. Life leases often offer classes such as woodworking, senior fitness, live entertainment sometimes broadcast directly into their suites, a store to provide basic essentials, and library services. Many even offer a level of personal and medical care including assisted bathing, on-site nursing and physiotherapy. Regularly hosted coffee and dinner parties help to bring the residents together and develop that sense of community that other seniors lose when they change their homes.

Despite the many benefits his parents experienced, my constituent feels there is room for improvement. They felt they had very little input into the operation of their home. While their building did have a residents' association, it only dealt with trivial matters such as when and how to set up and take down the Christmas decorations. This is what needs to change.

He expressed that his parents wished to have a voice in the important matters of the building and to have some oversight over decisions surrounding the raising and spending of fees, maintenance and key staff. Residents, many of them with beneficial experience and many others eager to learn, would be an asset to these facilities. With a real voice, they'll be as committed to their building and investment as they were to their own homes. This

bill gives them the well-earned opportunity to have just that.

One senior living in a life lease in the great riding of Barrie put it this way: "The chance to live completely independently, yet amid like-minded people, is a cause to celebrate." Don't let such celebrations be marred by an unregulated industry.

Today we have the opportunity to secure protections for senior citizens throughout the province. Life lease projects are a fantastic housing option for thousands of seniors throughout Ontario, but we can make this option better by ensuring that these projects are governed by a core group of rules and regulations.

Mr. Speaker, honoured guests and my fellow members of provincial Parliament, I call on you today to support and vote in favour of the Life Lease Act, 2016. Ensuring safe and affordable housing for seniors is part of this government's plan to build Ontario up. By passing this bill, we will be taking another great stride forward in our fight for fair and reliable housing options.

Before I finish, I would like to wish my constituents Wally Carruthers and Erryle and Tom George much happiness as they begin their new lives in life leases.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for your time and the honour of speaking before you here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 160, An Act to regulate life leases.

As our population ages, many seniors are looking to move to a more manageable home. This might be one without stairs, one with less maintenance or one that is smaller.

For many seniors, life lease properties are a good option that provides them with a safe place to live, without worrying about outdoor maintenance. Life lease communities are different than condominiums or town-house complexes in that the resident does not purchase the unit; they simply buy the right to lease it and live in it for life. The organization, or sponsor, continues to own the whole building, including all the units, which means that they retain most of the control. The person who leases the unit pays a monthly fee, similar to a condo fee, for maintenance and amenities.

In 2007, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp., or the CMHC, estimated that the total number of life lease communities in Canada was 287. According to one life lease website, there are now over 125 life lease communities in Ontario alone, and there are many more across Canada. As our population continues to age, it seems likely that we will see more of these types of units. Many seniors seem to enjoy being part of these communities, which often have activities and social programs, and enjoy their reduced responsibilities.

Many of these life lease communities are operated by non-profit organizations such as churches, municipalities and charities so they can keep rates low and put the money back into maintenance. However, as with all in-

dustries, there are some organizations that perform better than others.

There's a life lease community in Calgary that made news because the contract seniors signed prevented them from getting any of the market gains; they could only sell the unit back to the owner, minus a few thousand dollars for refurbishing. One senior owned the life lease for seven years during the Calgary housing boom, so the market increase would have been significant, but she didn't receive any of it. In fact, when she moved into a smaller unit owned by the same company, she had to put more equity into it.

There was a story of a life lease community where a widow was convinced to sign an agreement that gave the board sole discretion to determine the selling price of her life lease if she wanted to move, and gave the board 50% of any increase in market price.

While most of the life lease communities in Ontario use the market value model, there is no requirement for them to do so and nothing to prevent the types of stories that we've heard from other provinces.

There was a story from Ottawa of a group of seniors who put deposits on a future life lease project. They had to wait some time to have their deposits returned, after not enough units could be sold to proceed, because the developer had spent the deposit money on planning and site preparation.

Mr. Speaker, we agree with the need to ensure that our seniors are protected against people who try to take advantage of them.

As the member from Barrie has pointed out, life leases are a type of accommodation that is not covered by specific legislation. That means that seniors who are moving into these communities don't have the type of protection that someone living in a condominium or rental apartment would have.

1440

We should be clear that life lease communities are still covered by the fire code and the building code, so that there are protections—as there are for all Ontario homes—to ensure the safety of the building when it is built.

I do want to commend the member for good intentions in trying to protect seniors by introducing the bill to regulate these communities. However, those of us who have been involved with the Condominium Act, the Residential Tenancies Act or similar pieces of legislation know that rules around this housing are complex. They require extensive research and intensive consultation. We support the intention of what the member is trying to do, so we will support the bill at second reading so that we can get it to committee and have that consultation.

Legislation that impacts someone's home has to be created and amended with great care. As you know, this bill was introduced two days ago, on Tuesday, which didn't give members much time to research it. My office contacted the member from Barrie's office on Tuesday and asked for more information and background on the bill, but we haven't received anything yet—I'm sure it

will be on its way—nor could we find any information publicly. I hope that the member will take the time to provide more information in the future to help us in our discussion at committee if the bill makes it there.

Looking at the bill, we already have some concerns. While the bill requires a reserve fund to be maintained for repairs and replacement of assets, there are no standards set as to what constitutes good repair.

The bill requires notice for an annual meeting but does not provide any standards for how that notice is to be given. Is a small sign in the backroom enough? Does notice have to be mailed or emailed?

The bill requires the sponsor or owner of the life lease complex to return deposits or payments if the unit is not given to the leaseholder on the date specified in the agreement. While the intention is good, there is no timeline given for when the payment must be returned, no penalties if the sponsor fails to return it and no requirement for the sponsor to keep the deposit in a trust account to ensure that the money is still there when it's supposed to be repaid to the senior.

We are also concerned about the areas this bill fails to address.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is not the first province to look at legislation to regulate life lease communities. In fact, Manitoba passed the Life Leases Act in 1999, and has since amended it. It is a comprehensive piece of legislation.

Manitoba's Life Leases Act requires deposits to be held in trust accounts, and prevents the funds from being used for anything other than the residential complex where the leased unit is located.

It includes a cooling-off period, which allows the purchaser up to seven days to cancel the agreement. It also lays out requirements for disclosure, which the sponsor must provide to the purchaser, something that is being recommended to protect Ontario seniors.

Manitoba's legislation requires the sponsor to maintain insurance policies, as set out in regulation. There are requirements to notify a tenant representative about board meetings, and to share a copy of the minutes of the meeting.

None of these issues are addressed in this private member's bill. These are some of the issues that we would expect to arise through a full consultation. Perhaps the member has moved forward quickly with this bill because her government refused to do so.

In 2007, the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly sent a submission to the Ontario government that outlined some of their concerns with life lease communities. In the submission, they said, "It is encouraging that the government appears to be moving in the direction of creating consumer protection legislation to cover this area." However, almost 10 years later, there is no government legislation to protect our seniors living in these life lease communities. It appears that they were talking about it before the 2007 election, and afterward the consultation ended up on the shelf.

The Advocacy Centre for the Elderly is a community-based legal clinic that was raising concerns about how

Ontario seniors were being treated in their homes, and the government seems to have ignored it.

The Advocacy Centre for the Elderly reported multiple cases where seniors were told they were not permitted to use their walkers or wheelchairs in common areas such as hallways. This means they were essentially trapped in their unit.

They also reported that seniors in some life lease communities were only permitted to get care services from the provider associated with the building. This limits choice and can result in a resident being forced to accept lower levels of care or pay higher costs.

They reported that some life lease communities were falsely promising leaseholders guaranteed access to associated long-term-care homes, even though they had no control over the admission process or the waiting list. These are real problems being experienced by Ontario seniors in life lease communities, but the bill that we are debating today does not contain any measures to stop these mistreatments of our seniors.

The Advocacy Centre for the Elderly recommended that life lease legislation should include a method for dispute resolution. As they said in their submission, "Many seniors do not have the means to pursue dispute resolution by way of civil litigation through the court system. They should not be left without the opportunity to air their legitimate grievances about the operation of the project or decisions that affect their investment or their daily lives." Again, this is something that is not being addressed in this bill. We recommend that the legislation specifically include the right of lease holders to form residents' councils or other organizations to voice their concerns. Again, this is not part of the bill.

A number of organizations have recommended that there be disclosure requirements similar to those in the Manitoba legislation. In their studies, CMHC said, "There is also a need for disclosure requirements before seniors purchase their interest to ensure they are aware of the potential risks they face in their particular development." CMHC recommended that life lease legislation be put in place that includes:

- a cooling-off period;
- how a life lease interest can be registered;
- tenant representation on board;
- clarification of whether provincial rent control legislation affects increases in monthly occupancy fees;
- under what conditions deposits may be used by the developer to fund construction or for other purposes;
- reserve fund requirements; and
- disclosure requirements.

Mr. Speaker, we will support this bill so we can do what the government has failed to do over the last 10 years: protect our seniors who live in life lease communities. We look forward to the bill going to committee and having extensive committee hearings so we can create a comprehensive, well-thought-out piece of legislation that will make Ontario a leader in life lease communities and protect our seniors.

Thank you very much again to the member from Barrie for bringing this bill forward to start this debate, so we can make it better for all people who live in leased communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm pleased to rise on the Life Lease Act, 2016. As always, it's a great pleasure to rise to speak in this House, and I am particularly pleased to be able to speak today on Bill 160, An Act to regulate life leases: the Life Lease Act, 2016. The regulation of the life lease in Ontario is an important topic for us to be discussing because it primarily affects some of the most vulnerable people who live in our province: our seniors.

Far too often, I hear from seniors in my riding about the challenges they are facing. I'll list some of those challenges; maybe that's why they're looking to find lease opportunities:

—the rising cost of hydro, where they can't stay in their own homes. They can't afford to pay their hydro bills;

—unable to see a doctor quickly—and we have listened with real interest in the last few days as both parties over here have raised issues about our doctors and the challenges we're faced with and how the government has taken on the doctors rather than getting a settlement. I don't know how that helps our seniors with patient care;

—one that we saw is that gas prices went up, and our gas prices aren't regulated in the province of Ontario;

—the rising cost of food and how many seniors we're seeing in food banks today. Think about that. Our parents, our grandparents, have to go to food banks to be fed;

—the rising costs of health care and medication because of privatization, the cuts to health care and the cuts to our nurses. We saw that with Windsor, where they had 169 nurses. Think about this: When were they told they were going to cut nurses in Windsor? I want you to hear this, all three parties. They were told that information on Family Day. Isn't that something nice to take to your family?

—one that I think we're not talking about, and it is part of this bill, because it's why people are going to these, is the lack of affordable housing for seniors. I talk about my riding, in Fort Erie, Ridgeway, Crystal Beach and Niagara Falls. It's a huge issue. I have people come into my office almost every day about affordable housing. What do they do? They get into life leases. It's not necessarily that they want to, but they have to because they can't get affordable housing in their own community. As of right now, there are two pieces of legislation in Ontario that mention life leases: the Assessment Act and the Land Transfer Tax Act. Those are both good things. We shouldn't be taxing life lease holders differently than someone who lives in a home or a condo. And we shouldn't be applying a land transfer tax to the sale of a life lease since no land is actually being transferred from a buyer to a seller. So far, so good.

1450

But there's a problem, Mr. Speaker. I know you'll be interested in this. The problem is that those two acts are the full extent of legislation that mentions the holding, the purchase or the sale of the life lease in Ontario. Some other legislation will apply to the building in which the life lease unit is contained, as well as that of the sponsor or owner of that life lease. But it's a short list, with several important pieces missing.

You want to ask: What is missing? I'll tell you. What is missing from that list is the Residential Tenancies Act and the Condominium Act. Neither piece of legislation has any sort of regulation that applies to life leases. The serious under-regulation of life leases in Ontario is a growing problem. In particular, the popularity of life leases is growing—more among seniors who see it as a cost-effective way of finding housing in their later years. As the amount of life leases in effect in Ontario continues to grow, so too will the importance of having proper regulations for these leases.

That leads to the obvious question: Does the Life Lease Act, 2016, create a full and effective regulatory regime for life leases? First, the Life Lease Act, 2016 requires that the sponsor or the owner of the life lease refund payment to the holder of that life lease should the holder not be able to move into the unit on a specific day. This is a good first step. But clearly, in this situation, the sponsor or the owner of the life lease has not met their contractual obligation as it relates to the sale of the life lease, and there should be consequences in that situation. Life leases are considered a right to occupy, and anything that interferes with that right needs to be addressed.

The second area that the Life Lease Act, 2016, addresses is in regard to the need for repairs or the potential to replace within that life lease unit. The bill requires that the owner or the sponsor of the life lease unit must maintain a reserve fund to pay for unforeseen major repairs or replace assets. Again, this moves us in the right direction.

If you live in an apartment building and, through no fault of your own, major repairs are necessary on your unit, it is the responsibility of the owner of that building to make sure the repairs are completed. By ensuring that the owner or the sponsor of the life lease is required to maintain a fund to pay for repairs, we would help give peace of mind to seniors living in those units.

Unfortunately, the provisions of Bill 160 do not go as far as they could have. While the provision contained in this bill to address the issue of repairs is certainly a significant improvement over the current system—and this is important—it falls short of the standard set in the Condominium Act. The Condominium Act requires a third-party audit of the finances available for repairs, and that money actually is held in a separate audited account. By not coming up to the standard for the collection and maintenance of the reserve fund for the repairs, Bill 160 leaves a loose end which has the potential for incredible trouble.

Another area that the Life Lease Act, 2016, seeks to bring increased regulation to is in the area of disclosure.

This bill will maintain annual meetings between the sponsor or the owner of the lease and the owner of the life lease, as well as a disclosure of the financial information to the holder. At these meetings, the bill also requires that the holders of the life lease have the right to be heard. Again, this is another step in the right direction. It is absolutely essential that our seniors be able to have their voices heard as it relates to their care and their living standards. It's equally essential that anyone who holds a life lease be able to have the peace of mind provided by knowing that the finances of the building where they live are in good shape.

That being said, there's another area where the Life Lease Act, 2016 could have gone further. If you live in a condo or you rent an apartment in a building, you have to go through the Condominium Act—you can look at it—or the Residential Tenancies Act, respectively, to a dispute resolution process that does not require formal legal action against the owner or your condo building or your rental company, whatever it is.

However, if you are a holder of a life lease, you do not have that option, and that makes no sense. In fact, a lawyer from the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly has informed us that, "Seniors are not going to undertake formal legal action against the institution where they live, depend on care and are fed—often a special diet. They tend to be fearful"—this isn't just seniors; it's a lot of people who rent, by the way—"of repercussions. A non-confrontational mediation/arbitration system needs to be built into the system."

While I'm happy to see there is some obligation for disclosure and communication being built into this bill, I believe we would better serve our seniors of this province by adding a system that is closer to what the ACE has said is absolutely necessary.

Mr. Speaker, the final provision of the Life Lease Act, 2016, that I would like to discuss today is one that I think we all need more detailed information about from the government. The bill contains a provision that says the LG in Council can prescribe anything that may be prescribed under this act and another one that says the cabinet can create exemptions to the bill.

From my reading of the bill, there doesn't seem to be much that can be prescribed, and there also in my mind aren't many people or companies that should be exempt from these requirements. So I'd be interested to hear from the member from Barrie about what possible exemptions she sees on what could be prescribed by the LG in Council. I think having that information fully disclosed will make it much easier for all of us here to make a judgment on the merits of the bill.

That brings us back to the question I asked earlier: Does the Life Lease Act, 2016, create a full and effective regulatory regime for life leases? Of course, as with most issues that come up in this House, the answer to my question may be, "Yes or no, sort of." The Life Lease Act, 2016, makes an excellent start at filling some of the regulatory gaps that exist in the world of life leases, their owners and their holders, but it still has shortcomings.

The bill does not require as high a standard for reserve funds for repairs as other legislation does. It doesn't create a non-confrontational dispute resolution system that seniors can use. That leaves us with many important questions whose answers will have a serious impact on the effect of the bill.

1500

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The minister responsible for seniors' affairs—the minister without portfolio.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In my few minutes, I want to have your indulgence that I'll be sharing the time with the member from Ottawa—Orléans and the wonderful member from Scarborough—Agincourt as well.

Congratulations to the member from Barrie for bringing this piece of legislation to the House, and also to the members from both sides, that they have spoken so eloquently, mentioning some of the pitfalls that they, according to their experience, expressed with respect to various forms. There are a number of life leases; there is not just one particular form. There are a number of types of life leases that suit the variety of our people.

I've heard from all three members in the House that seniors weren't mentioned. Let me say that it's not only seniors who go into this type of housing accommodation, but it is mainly chosen by seniors, for good reasons: the style of living—modest, if you will; affordability; a communal type of life. They want to have an easier time, to have a flexible time when they want to go on holidays. If they are snowbirds or snowflakes or whatever, they want to make sure that they can leave and the property is being taken care of. And it's not only a type of life lease that is an apartment. It can be a semi-detached; it can be a condo; it can be a house—many, many forms. There are reasons why people choose to go into a life lease situation.

The bill as it is presented is not supposed to be the final document. I think we have to compliment the member from Barrie for bringing this to the attention of the House, to initiate the debate and to move it forward. Let me tell you, Speaker, that there is a lot of interest out there, both from the providers and from the occupants of this type of accommodation.

In my previous life—I have to say this very quickly because time goes fast—I did a consultation on life leases for then-Minister of Housing Jim Watson. Let me tell you that there are a lot of problems associated with this particular type of housing accommodation. So let's initiate the debate. Let's go to the public. Let's bring everything. I don't think that the member from Barrie means that this is the final document; I don't think so. She knows very well that we want to move it forward and we want to have proper consultation from all sides. I would say, hopefully it's done very quickly—and then bring it back to this House with the input of the members of the House and the various stakeholders. Then we can say that we have some documents that indeed provide not only safety and security but also some of the protections that those occupants are looking for.

The problem that I have experienced myself is that there is no particular responsibility now on behalf of the providers, and those providers are very often organized groups. They can be religious groups or professional builders, whatever—developers—that want to go into this type of business, if you will. They are doing very well.

Given the number of seniors coming on stream and the affordability of housing, I have to say that this form of housing will be on the increase. Anything we can do to bring some peace and quiet into this particular industry would go a long way in bringing some peace into the minds and hearts and homes of those people who want to move into a form of leasehold housing.

I want to congratulate the member for bringing this to the House. I hope that we can move it quickly, indeed, and then bring it back a final time when we can say, "Yes, we can offer some serious protection where the occupants of those properties have rights as well," because at the present time they are at the mercy of their provider.

I'll let my colleague add to it, and I want to thank you for the time, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon and support my colleague and my seatmate behind me in support of this bill, the Life Lease Act.

Before the House returned this week, I spent an extensive period of time meeting with constituents about their concerns dealing with life leases. The concern that has been raised by the member from Barrie is actually very true.

I have several pieces of life lease contracts that I want to share with the members of the House. A significant number of our constituents have bought into these life leases, thinking it's like a condominium, when in fact it's not a condominium.

I had a constituent brought to my attention. They had just moved into this life lease. Within one year of moving into this life lease—they used to live in a condominium; now they're in a life lease—their rent, a so-called management fee, went up 200%. There's a lack of transparency with the management fee—and the fact that they don't own that unit, called a unit; they have to pay property taxes. It is not a property; they have a permanent lease to live in that unit.

The other piece I want to add on to this debate about life leases—because a significant number of my constituents in Scarborough—Agincourt are buying into life lease units. One of the articles that has recently been shared is from the Canadian Bar Association. In 2009, they did a paper called *The Real Dirt on Real Estate: Shared Property, Granny Units and Life Leases*. That's the title of the article, Mr. Speaker. I want to share with the members of the House this particular article. The article talks about the five different models of life leases in Canada and the concerns about different aspects of the life leases that the member from Barrie talked about earlier.

Some of the concerns involve the entrance fee, the piece dealing with the disclosure of the entrance fee, the disclosure of the management fee as well as the protection of the deposits, because some of the developers/sponsors of these life leases can use the funds to develop the construction of the life leases, but then the construction goes belly up.

How are we ensuring that these seniors who bought into the life lease have protection? We just recently changed legislation to protect all condominium owners. The question has to be asked.

We now have a colleague wanting this Legislature to protect all those seniors across the province to have housing, but also, more importantly, the investment called a life lease. I want to applaud my colleague from Barrie for bringing forth this piece of legislation, but also to encourage every member of the House to support this piece of legislation so that it can go to committee for further debate.

I'm going to stop so my colleague from Ottawa—Orléans can speak about the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'm very proud to rise today and speak on behalf of my colleague from Barrie's private member's bill, An Act to regulate life leases.

I will share, a little further down in my notes, that I was the co-owner of a retirement residence, and I worked in the retirement home industry prior to this for 15 years. I must say that, as we're seeing this aging population, life leases have certainly become an increasingly popular option for many people in this province. I'm very proud that the member from Barrie is bringing this to this House as a debate.

Many people in this province are certainly exploring housing options as they grow older. They understand that they're protected under the landlord and tenant act and our newly updated condo act. Certainly, in a retirement residence, we follow the landlord and tenant act. But when it comes to life leases—as was explained by my colleague—there's no one, overarching piece of legislation that regulates and captures this form of housing arrangement.

As I mentioned a little earlier, I was the business owner of a retirement residence, and I certainly understand the needs of seniors and the aging baby boomers, and the need to have greater housing options for people as they enter the latter stage of their lives.

1510

The exploitation of seniors and the elderly should not be a concern as people age. Certainly, this is something that I think we need to address, and I'm so proud to see the member for Barrie addressing this today. People should feel secure and safe in the housing arrangements they choose. That is why it is important that we pass this bill today and set its course to committee. Therefore, I encourage all members of the Legislature to give seniors greater safety of mind and home by passing this important bill, brought forward by my colleague the member from Barrie.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I see 48 seconds on the clock. I can't resist that. This bill commends itself to support in the Legislative Assembly.

The Niagara Peninsula—other members from the peninsula would know this, and it may be around the province: We have some experience now with life leases, particularly because we have a greater-than-usual number of people who are in their senior years looking for an alternative to the residence in which they already live. I think they have cried out for our Legislature to address it. Just as they see rentals and condominiums addressed at the present time, they want to see life leases addressed.

I want to commend the member for bringing this forward, and I hope this bill will move forward to committee, where it can receive further study and input from those who are concerned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

I wish to inform the House that the motion on second reading of Bill 160 will take place at the time—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Oh, I'm sorry. Thank you.

I apologize to the member from Barrie. She has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank everyone who spoke.

I do know that it seemed like it was at the last moment; however, this has been in the planning for some time.

I love all the suggestions. They are really good suggestions. My idea was that it would go to committee, and that's where things work best, when we all have our best ideas. Problems that may happen in Niagara Falls are not necessarily problems that have happened in Barrie. We need to all get together in committee and make this the best bill it can be.

The difficulty with regulating too much is that most of the sponsors who run these life leases are perhaps religious groups—churches—and not-for-profits. We don't want to regulate so much that they won't do this, because seniors are very fond of this, where they can keep the equity from their houses so that they have money to go into long-term-care when it's time to go there. So I think we have to be careful. It's not exactly like condos. As a matter of fact, there are a lot more amenities, and people are usually much happier in life leases than they are in condos. As we all know, when people are happier, they live longer and are healthier.

I thank the member from Oxford, the member from Niagara Falls, the minister responsible for seniors affairs, my colleagues the members from Scarborough—Agin-court and from Ottawa—Orléans, and also Mr. Bradley, from St. Catharines. I hope that we pass this bill and make it much more detailed, for the sake of seniors. This is a good way for them to have housing in their old age.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Now I wish to inform the House that the motion for second reading of

Bill 160 will take place after private members' ballot items have been concluded this afternoon.

ELIMINATION OF GROUND CURRENT POLLUTION ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR L'ÉLIMINATION DE L'ÉLECTROPOLLUTION DU SOL

Mr. Nicholls moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act to prohibit harmful electrical ground current / Projet de loi 161, Loi interdisant les courants électriques telluriques nuisibles.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and present Bill 161, the Elimination of Ground Current Pollution Act, 2016. As the PC critic for community safety—Bill 161 addresses a major issue facing rural and even urban Ontario and needs to finally be addressed.

I'd like to recognize the major driving force that has motivated me to present this bill: Lee Montgomery. You'll find him in the members' gallery. A former award-winning dairy farmer who lives just north of my riding of Chatham—Kent—Essex, Lee has been relentless in his pursuit of resolving this issue for over 40 years. Lee lost his entire herd due to ground current pollution, and sadly, he lost the love of his life, his wife, Donna. He believes that her death can be attributed to the same problem that killed his herd.

I also want to recognize Dr. Magda Havas, also sitting in the members' gallery. Magda has been able to provide scientific evidence proving that ground current pollution exists and does kill livestock.

I have met and observed ground current testing with Dr. Don Zipse, an electrical forensic engineer from Wilmington, Delaware, in the United States, and I've also met with Mr. Peter Stern on several occasions at his farming operation in Drumbo, Ontario. Over the last 10 years Mr. Stern has lost over 110 dairy cattle, and most recently he lost six dairy cattle and had two stillborn calves. Think of the economic losses, but also think of the physical and emotional strain that that dairy farmer, and dairy farmers and other individuals—farmers throughout Ontario—face when that happens.

This tragedy is not only affecting the dairy business but all livestock farms throughout Ontario, and it must stop now. I have one question: Where is the OSPCA? This is animal cruelty, but I want to assure the farmers that it is not their fault. So OSPCA, do not blame the farmers.

Speaker, this problem isn't just limited to our province. Wisconsin, Minnesota, Connecticut, Vermont, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts and Idaho are all amongst US states that have either put in place state legislation or have put in place the establish-

ment of commissions to address the problem of ground current. Here in Ontario, this debate marks the first time that legislation dealing with the problem of ground current has been debated here in the Legislature in just under a decade.

Some may say that this is not a new bill. They are partially correct, as a former Liberal MPP, Maria Van Bommel, introduced a similar bill in 2006. It passed second reading with all-party support, but it died on the order table, never to see the light of day again, until now.

I've been working in preparation of debating this bill for quite some time. I have spoken with stakeholders throughout Ontario, giving township and county council presentations and alerting rural communities to the negative effects of ground current pollution on livestock. I've heard questions raised about the potential impact on humans now and for future generations.

I would like to take a moment to thank the councils from Brant county, Oxford county, and North Dumfries and Blandford-Blenheim townships for allowing me to be present at their council meetings and to share with them my findings regarding ground current pollution.

1520

I also want to read into the record part of Brant county's letter from Mayor Ron Eddy to Minister Chiarelli, the Minister of Energy:

"The council of the county of Brant is extremely concerned about this issue of stray current, which is pertinent to any resident of the rural communities throughout Ontario. Stray current has been a concern to livestock owners for many years. The negative impact of stray current on livestock is significant and many agricultural operators have been seriously compromised by this problem through lost productivity and through animal mortality.

"Further, the detriment to health and well-being of impacted farm animals from stray current is very concerning. Even more alarming is that new evidence suggests human health may be impacted by this issue."

Mayor Eddy goes on to say, "Stray current can be addressed through changes in both the policy and practice of the provincially regulated electrical distribution and electrical services industries."

To be clear, voltage does not kill, but current does. Voltage is the pressure that pushes electrons from a transmission or distribution line, producing current.

Before I get too detailed in my bill, I also want to be very clear about another important item. I view this bill, Bill 161, as a non-partisan bill. Allow me, Speaker, to express my reasons why. Over the past 40-plus years, all three parties in this Legislature have in fact been in power at one time or another, but they've done little or nothing to rectify the problems of what some may still call stray voltage.

For the record, I know that Hydro One coincidentally inserted a brochure on what they call stray voltage in their recent billings just prior to the debate of my bill.

Just looking around the gallery today—and I know some have had to go—members of our farming commun-

ity were here to listen to this bill being debated. We still have some up in the public gallery and I would like to recognize them. Thank you for your support of this bill.

Farmers of varying backgrounds and farming operations from all across Ontario are here, and they're here today because they're worried about losing their family farming businesses and they're worried about the effects of ground current pollution on their families' and neighbours' properties. They, like me, know that farming in Ontario is in jeopardy if this issue isn't properly addressed. Ground current causes livestock to experience health issues such as mastitis, foot rot, open sores that won't heal even with antibiotics, sudden death and even miscarriages. This results in a huge financial loss to our farmers.

Now, you may not want to hear what I'm about to say, but it needs to be said. There are those who have a vested interest in protecting the electrical utility and want to blame farmers. There is scientific evidence that proves that Hydro One is not measuring the right metrics in the right way—and, hence, after visiting a farm, there is no problem, they say. Yet cows continue to dance up a storm, milk production is down and the cows and farmers are sick.

Farmers in Ontario need legislative support as well as the support of the associations they belong to. Thomas Edison said this: "Never put current in the ground."

In 2009, the Ontario Energy Board, the OEB, enacted code amendments detailing procedures and methodology for dealing with occurrences of stray voltage. This was a positive step, and the province should be commended for taking this initiative. I would like to point out that the OEB prepared a staff discussion paper pertaining to Farm Stray Voltage: Issues and Regulatory Options back in 2008. I would also like to commend the OEB for their efforts.

Loads are increasing on the distribution lines in rural Ontario. The OEB has a number of recommendations to solve the issue of ground current pollution, but the one that the utilities have implemented is actually making the problem worse. Existing distribution lines are inadequate to handle increasing loads. According to section 9.3.2 of the OEB staff discussion paper, distributors in Canada are not regulated as to how they investigate suspected stray voltage cases. If the government fails to implement both proper assessment and proper solutions, the cost to farming businesses will continue to grow.

A lack of attention to the fulfillment of the OEB's recommendations from eight years ago continues to haunt rural Ontario. Electrical codes are being disregarded with respect to illegal dumping at substations.

A beef farmer from my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex sent me an email this past Tuesday stating that he lives in fear of the unknown and silent killer, ground current pollution. You can't see it, you can't hear it, you can't smell it, but animal and human bodies sense it.

Another concern shared by many farmers is that complaints are not being seriously taken to heart. We need to send a message across rural Ontario that their voices will

be heard. That's exactly what my bill will guarantee. The bill will require electrical providers to respond to a complaint within 10 days of receiving it, investigate the claim within 30 days, and take all necessary steps to eliminate objectionable current flow within five months. If passed, Bill 161 would require the government to develop a comprehensive plan for the elimination of objectionable ground current in Ontario within two years after the day on which this section comes into force and complete the implementation of the plan within 10 years of that date. This may, in fact, be the most important component of the bill. We must send a clear message that Ontario is committed to solving the problem.

Speaker, since my time is limited, it's important to note that my passion for community safety involves more than just human safety, but also being the voice for livestock throughout Ontario—no, I won't make an animal noise. These animals are experiencing massive health issues through execution by ground current pollution.

When you know you're doing the right thing, how can you be wrong?

I will now allow for further debate, and I will come back to my concluding comments in a moment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise to speak to this bill today. I want to note again the presence of Mr. Montgomery here, who was around the last time we debated this bill, when Maria Van Bommel brought it forward—a bill that we debated in 2006, which I spoke in favour of at the time. I think that Mr. Nicholls is doing us a service by bringing it forward again. I'm sorry that Ms. Van Bommel's act wasn't passed into law; it should have been. I think today we should be supporting this bill, and I urge the government—I urge Mr. Bradley there, watching this in a benign sort of way, to act as a spokesperson in the Liberal caucus to move the bill forward, go to committee, come back for third reading and be put into place.

Frankly, Speaker, I was taken aback in 2006 that Ms. Van Bommel even had to bring the bill forward. I said at the time, "Why are we debating this? This is pretty straightforward. If you've got leakage of current into the ground, if you're damaging livestock, if you're damaging farmers, why on earth wouldn't we correct it?" It appears that although some steps were taken—and Mr. Nicholls related that in his speech—obviously, inadequate action was taken.

It makes complete sense for us to enact this bill, make the investment and clean up the system so that we aren't getting stray current and we aren't getting this kind of damage.

In 2009 and 2011, we had problems in Toronto with stray current that led to the electrocution of a number of pets. Very quickly, Toronto Hydro dispatched crews all over the city to deal with leaking current that was causing this kind of risk to animal life and, frankly, risk to one police officer who intervened on an animal that was being electrocuted. There is no reason on earth that the

rest of Ontario should not get at least the same level of concern and service as was shown in Toronto by Toronto Hydro.

1530

I noted in 2006, and it strikes me again, that the standard in Alberta was much more severe than the one here. We allow, in Ontario, up to 10 volts as a limit. In Alberta, it's one. In Vermont and Wisconsin, it's 0.5. I would say, Speaker, there is no reason on earth we shouldn't have the same standards as jurisdictions like those. We have a large rural population. We're going to be distributing electricity for many decades to come, I hope, and there is no reason that farmers and rural populations should have to deal with this kind of risk.

I wanted to note—and it struck me back when we debated the bill originally—that the stray current problem tended to be most severe at times of peak power demand: 6 to 9 in the morning and then in the evening. It made sense at the time and it makes sense now not only to deal with the wiring issue but also to deal with the consumption issue, to the extent that farms and rural operations are given the support to transition to low-demand electrical appliances and high-efficiency equipment. There will be less current drawn into the system overall and less current to stray and to go out and cause this tingle or electrocution.

My colleague Mr. Vanthof will be talking from a far more knowledgeable position than me on farms, cattle operations and the sorts of difficulties that people face. But I want to say, as someone who believes that we need to make a very large-scale transition in Ontario to renewable energy, I believe that electricity is going to be the core of our energy system in the years to come. It's big now, and it will be much bigger, but if we don't deal with this issue, we're going to have people saying, "We don't want more investment in electricity. We don't want an expansion of the electricity system." We need that. To the extent that we are discouraging people, undermining them economically, undermining their sense of the capacity and resourcefulness of the province by ignoring this issue, we undermine our future.

I want to thank the member for bringing this bill forward. It was the responsible thing to do. I'm glad you've gone and talked to others around Ontario and promoted the bill.

Again, I urge everyone in this House to vote for the bill, and I urge the government to not let this one just go into orbit, circling around committees and never touching down, but to actually have hearings, have amendments, where necessary, and have it brought back for third reading and ultimately proclamation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Granville Anderson: I'm so honoured to be able to speak to this bill this afternoon. I would like to thank the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex for this bill. I'd also like to thank the member from Toronto–Danforth for his contribution to the bill here this afternoon. I would also like to thank the members of our farm community who are here in support of this bill.

As you heard this morning from the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, we are very supportive of this bill. As we also know, a very familiar piece of legislation was brought to us by the former member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, from our side of the floor—in support of this bill. It is my hope that this legislation passes and that we can move forward with regulating stray current.

Being from Durham, we know how important farms, farmers and the safety and security of our crops and livestock are. They are integral to our economy and our community. It makes up part of our lives, along the urban-rural boundaries, and I'm thankful that our government is so committed to supporting farms and farmers across our great province.

I received an email recently from a constituent in Newcastle that brought the blight of stray current to prominence for me. I have heard about it, but I didn't know it had such a devastating effect on our farm community and our farmers in general. This is one of my constituents from lovely Newcastle. She told me that her family dairy farm has been hit by stray current for a long time. They've had this farm for over 100 years, and she believes that the health of her family's cattle has declined in the last eight years due to ground pollution from stray current. According to her, they have lost 30 dairy cows over the last eight years, and have spent thousands of dollars researching the reasons, causing the family great stress. They believe that stray current is the only constant in this situation—that the cows slowly die, with nothing the veterinary profession can do to help them.

She asked me to act so that her family farm would not have to leave her family's hands, and so that they could sustain the business with healthy cattle and a healthy farm. That drove home the importance of this bill, as far as I'm concerned. I am so glad to be able to tell her story today. I am very supportive of this legislation that will hopefully help her family, and other family farms in the future.

Of course, our government has been aware of this problem, and the ministry has assured us that they are taking action on their own part. The Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture have been co-operating, and numerous industry members have been working with government to come up with a solution.

This has resulted in a pilot program designed to identify instances of stray current, assess approaches to testing for it, look at how our current system contributes to the problem, and address standards that can be applied in the field.

As well, the Ontario Energy Board requires local distribution companies to investigate stray current complaints from livestock farm customers and to make the details of their response procedure known.

Mr. Speaker, in my riding, there are over 500 farms, and I do understand that farming is a very important part of the economy of my riding of Durham as well as Ontario in general. This bill is a step forward in trying to preserve our farming community.

I am glad that the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex has taken action, and I am proud to support that action. I am glad to support our government's efforts as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 161, An Act to prohibit harmful electrical ground current. I want to congratulate my colleague from Chatham–Kent–Essex for bringing this bill forward.

I want to take a moment to introduce someone in the gallery as well. Sheena Symington is the daughter of Barbara Symington, from my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I know Barbara. Barbara lives in Renfrew, but Sheena lives in Bobcaygeon, in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, so I'm sure the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock will want to say hello as well. Thank you for joining us here today to support my colleague on this bill.

I'd never heard of stray voltage or stray current or tingle voltage or whatever before I became a member of the Legislature almost 13 years ago, and then I had the opportunity to debate and speak when Maria Van Bommel brought forth the bill. It must be about nine years ago, maybe. Is it 10 years ago? Ten years ago she brought forth the bill. They were calling it stray voltage then, even in the bill.

I did want to make one comment. Whether you call it stray current or stray voltage or ground current, I'm absolutely certain that the cows don't care. They just want it to stop. That's essentially what we're trying to accomplish with my colleague's bill here today. Whatever you call it, there's not much question that for the livestock, it's harmful. So we have to find a way in order to eliminate that, and that's what the bill calls for exactly.

1540

My colleague from Toronto–Danforth pointed out that the standards in Ontario are up to 20 times higher voltage than in some other jurisdictions. That should bring us to question it right off the bat. How can we allow 10 volts when Vermont was 0.5 volts? It really just makes no sense whatsoever.

There is going to be debate on this bill. Hopefully, the government will act upon it. I want to point out that my colleague—and he knows a lot more about it than I do—has been working on this since he got here. It's been something that he has taken a passionate view on. Basically, he said, "I'm not going to stop until we do something to eliminate this hazard to our livestock." I commend him for taking all of the necessary actions. He has brought this forth to this point. This is the second reading debate today.

I'm confident that the government, as they have already said and as the member for Durham has said, is going to support it. They believe that it's right. But we also have to take this to the next level. If we really, truly believe that we're going to try to eliminate this harmful ground current, then it has to go beyond the readings today.

I want to say to my colleague again, thank you very much. Thank you for educating us again on this—because, quite frankly, there are so many issues that get debated in this Legislature and there are so many issues that get brought before us as members, that unless it's coming by us on a regular basis, we move on to other issues. It's whatever issue is being brought to us most vocally at any given time. But Mr. Nicholls has been dogged, over the last several years, in pointing out this is something we have to deal with.

So we're dealing with it today by virtue of legislation second reading debate here on Bill 161. But as I have said, if it stops here, then we haven't accomplished that much. It has to go beyond this. This has to get to committee and it has to get through to the third reading so that we can proclaim it into law. There are teeth in the bill. There are some real limits. There are some real schedules. There are time limits as to when the utilities have to act and how much time they have in order to ensure that those changes take place. That's giving the utilities time to come up with a plan to make sure that it can be dealt with, but also, when there's a complaint, making sure they respond to that complaint in a timely fashion. The other thing that we've heard over the years is that we don't get a good enough, quick enough response to complaints.

All of the things that are being done in the bill today are going to be extremely helpful. Hopefully, we'll move on from this to the next step. As other members have said, farming is a core industry in our civilization. Without farming, we're not eating. I don't look that good here now, but I'll tell you, I'm going to look a lot worse if I don't eat for a while. We want to make sure that we're doing whatever we can to assist those people who put the food on our table, to ensure that their herds are healthy and they can continue to do what they do in such a marvelous fashion, making this country the great one that it is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to rise in this House and speak on any issue, but it's especially an honour to be able to speak on Bill 161. It's an agricultural issue and, actually, it's pretty well a dairy issue in a lot of cases. I'd like to commend the member for bringing it forward.

Before I get too far on my ramblings, I'd like to say that we've all got to push because this bill—something similar was brought many years ago and it should have been implemented by the government. This one is going to take a lot of work. It's going to take much more than just here today to get this done.

One of the reasons why this issue has trouble getting traction—the first time I heard about it was when I started dairy farming 30 years ago. I've been a dairy farmer for 30 years—retired four years ago. The first piece of resistance you get on this issue is from the electrical community, from an electrician: When you start explaining what happens on some farms—"No, no,

no. That can't be." What makes it a really tricky issue is that it doesn't happen on all farms to the same degree.

Before I go further, I'd like to welcome our guests here and thank you for taking the time to come.

That's what makes it a tricky issue, so it's an easy one to explain away. We've had these issues in my riding. I come from Timiskaming-Cochrane, and there are about 50 dairy farms around New Liskeard. I've had these, "Well, you know—wink, wink, nudge, nudge—he's not managing this correctly, or she's not doing this correctly." But farmers know, and what is really frustrating to the farm community is that whenever we do something—we put a piece on the barn—everything has to be up to code. So everything is up to code, but the electrical supply coming in and leaving isn't up to code. That's the most frustrating thing.

What we found in my little part of the world—I'm no expert; I made my living milking cows. I'm not an electrician. We had a farm electrician—he's still a farm electrician—Jean Caron. We all call him Johnny Light; he still does a lot of the electrical work in our area. He saved a lot of our bacon, because he had come to understand that certain things cause troubles and certain things seemed to work.

One thing where we had a lot of trouble is that we live in an old glacial lake basin—if you dig four feet down, it's water. Our barns used to be all built on floating pads, floating foundations. When the ground froze, they went up and down. But that no longer works for code. You have to dig down eight feet. We have way more trouble with—you can call it whatever you want; I don't even pretend to know the difference between current and voltage. I just know that there's certain electricity you've got to avoid, and that caused huge problems. Again, nobody really knew that. We had to learn that the hard way.

Something else that seems to cause more trouble is if you build a big new barn with a steel structure. But nobody told us. These are great structures. It's the way to build a barn. I remember when the first one went up in my riding. I was still farming, and I had an old wooden barn. Oh, boy, I walked in this place, and I liked that barn better than I like this building. It was a nice barn. But it turned out—the farmers there are very progressive, but they've gone through thousands of dollars and hours to try to get this fixed. Guess what? The newer barns that are going up in our area are wood-framed.

Why does the agricultural community have to learn that themselves through the school of hard knocks when we all know that this issue exists? That is the most frustrating thing. That's why I commend Mr. Nicholls, and I commend Maria Van Bommel for bringing this forward the first time.

I'm going to chastise the government a little bit, because they have been the government for more than a decade and they know this exists. Again, the reason this problem isn't being moved on that quickly is that the people on the government side—they're not bad people; I disagree with them a lot, but they're not bad people—

will go to their experts, to the electrical community, and the electrical community will tell them, "Well, not really. It's not that bad. Because look, there are a lot of very productive farms," and there are. But it's an individual issue. It's an issue that has to be solved. It's an issue in more than just dairy, but it's easiest to identify in dairy.

I get a little—"offended" is the wrong word—upset when I hear this about dancing cows. This is a hard issue to explain to other people, because you think of dancing cows, and they're thinking, "Are they hip hop or"—no. The real problem is that—if the stray voltage was a matter of the cow standing in the milking parlour and getting electrocuted and falling down dead, that would actually be better, because you'd then have to figure out what happened. But that's not what happens. Those cows are irritated for months—for years—and that causes chronic ailments, which end up killing them.

It also ends up killing the farm family, financially and other ways.

1550

But certainly the stress—and that's why you can measure it in dairy. Because we measure all kinds of things in milk, right? So the somatic cell count—somatic cells are white blood cells in the milk, and when a cow is under stress, more of these blood cells will come to fight whatever is stressing it. They test that. Every time you ship milk, they test the somatic cell count, and the higher that count goes, it tells you there's a problem.

That's one of the initial things. You've got a somatic cell count you can't control, despite all the management things you're employing. That's telling you there's a problem, but it's not universal across all farms—and that's what this government has to remember. When somebody in the electrical system says, "Oh, no, no, it's not a problem because we've got 5,000 farms working perfectly and this couple of hundred over here, they've got"—no, no. It's a much deeper issue, and I urge this government to actually work with all of us and get this fixed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: An historic day in which Liberals, Conservatives and New Democrats are all on the same side on an energy issue; we all happen to agree on this one.

I thank my colleagues for some of their contributions toward this issue of stray voltage, which is often called phantom voltage, stray current; it exists under many different names. And I thank the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex for once again resurrecting my former colleague Maria Van Bommel's bill. I remember when she presented it in the House a number of years ago—I think it was in the 39th Parliament—and it passed at that time. I wish him luck in seeing OMAFRA take this idea—and either incorporate it or pass this bill. But in one form or another, let's get this one enacted.

This is not just an issue that stems from power generation. Among the other things that may be on a farm that can contribute to this would be faulty wiring, improper

grounding, an overloaded circuit or defective equipment. You can have much the same potential difference between an object and an ungrounded source of electricity if you've got voltage from phone lines, for example; it's also possible that a gas pipeline, which is made of iron, can be carrying an unintended or unwanted current.

One of the reasons that we often see this manifested most strongly in dairy farms is that, frankly, vegetables have no particular way of telling you if they're being subjected to stray voltage. An animal being connected to a milking machine can often receive a very severe shock of static electricity. The important thing to remember is that it's not just the voltage. It's also the current. For example, on a dry day, if you reach out to touch something, you can hear a snap and you'll get a shock from static electricity. You're actually getting a shock of several thousand volts, but it's a very, very low current.

So for this issue of stray voltage or stray current or stray electricity, what you really need is a strong enough current that the current is carrying the electricity to the point where, in the case of dairy farms, it could be affecting the animal. This is often seen when you would find, for example, a cow that normally has no trouble going up and being connected to the milking machine, which certainly relieves the pressure of the milk on the animal, but now is reluctant to go near a milking machine because it knows it's going to get a continuous low voltage or low current of electricity passing through it while it's giving milk. If I was the cow, I too would be reluctant.

You might find, for example, that the animal would have reduced water or feed intake. You could find, as my colleague stated earlier, the milk output could be lower or you could find some substances in the milk that you contract. There are a number of different ways that an animal will try to communicate to its owner that something is wrong.

This is an issue about which, over the years, Hydro One has said, "To the degree that this emanates from our gear, we're going to take this one very seriously." So if you're watching this and you're on a farm, here's a number to write down: 1-888-664-9376. If you think you've got a problem with stray voltage, you should pick up the phone and call 1-888-664-9376.

This is one that our power generators and our local distribution companies and Hydro One take very seriously, and it's one on which the Ministry of Energy has spent some serious time and effort working with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and specifically in response to reports of stray voltage. Hydro One, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and other industry stakeholders have been working together for some time. They're working on a pilot program designed to identify, assess and mitigate instances of stray voltage and stray current.

They're also looking at assessing alternative approaches to testing, because one of the ways to address it is—first of all, if there's a means of finding the problem before you notice it in the behaviour of your animals,

then it's something that both the farmer and the utility can get on and we can identify where the source is and what you do about it.

We need to look broadly at how electrical systems contribute to current and voltage on farms. As well, we need to work with the OFA to get the point across to a lot of our farmers that you shouldn't take the integrity of your own electrical system and your equipment for granted forever. It's something that you've got to continue to review and it's something that you've got to continue to check.

One of the most common causes of stray voltage is a degraded insulator on a tower or on a piece of equipment or on something on the farm or something that is intended to ground the voltage in the ground. If the insulation starts to degrade, that can cause current to flow through the ground, or if an electrical wire should fall, then there will be a piece of ground that's subjected to often a very high current and that could be conducted an indeterminate distance, depending on the moisture conditions and what's in the soil. For example, soil that has a higher quantity of iron will conduct electricity more so than soil that has a lower quantity. If the soil is wetter, it can conduct electricity a lot further, and so on and so forth.

Among the things that Hydro One and the OFA and the Dairy Farmers are working on is to assess how standards and procedures are applied in the field. This is one particular issue for which Hydro One plans to use the findings of this pilot program to improve its policies and its communications and especially its responses for our dairy farmers, for whom this is a very real problem that the province recognizes and is hoping to contribute to a solution.

I thank my colleague for bringing the bill forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I appreciate the opportunity and the hard work done by the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex on his act today to prohibit alternating ground current. I was here 10 years ago when we discussed this, and here we are, still talking about it. So the time for action is now.

I want to recognize—and I'm not going to get everybody, but I know I have some dedicated dairy farmers from my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I can't see everybody, but I think John Devos is here, Kurt Schmidt—I don't know if John and Carson made it. Anyway, some had to go—and Mark Grossi I believe is here.

Interjection: He's watching via Internet.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Watching via Internet? Hello, Mark. And also Sheena—I haven't met you yet but I'm coming over there to say hello. Thank you very much for taking the time to come.

Look, in a nutshell, a lot of this has been said. We have, actively, 22 cases in my riding office that we're dealing with right now. Now, the majority are from my riding. We are helping some other ridings, but that's

okay. And the fact that I have that many cases is shocking. I want a big shout-out to Bonnie from my office, who I know is the front-line person to receive a lot of the phone calls and deals a lot with hydro.

We have the stories ranging from the cows not able to drink from the water bowls—they get shocked. They actually have died with no illness detected. They stopped eating and drinking. The quality of the milk is so poor that farmers can't meet their quota. Cattle are afraid to get on the rotary parlour where they are milked and they're being forced to get on it. Cows are kicking the milker off of themselves. A lot of the farmers are reporting reproductive issues.

1600

One farmer actually reported use losing 18 cows in 15 months, and another lost 18 cattle in 12 months. Production and breeding are down. The milk board actually shut one farm down due to reproduction drop, and he was also coming up with lame cows and calves that were aborted. We had the story that they spent \$40,000 on an AgriVolt meter that didn't work. It lost approximately \$300,000 between cattle dying and production.

One farmer purchased a bull for reproduction, and he wasn't performing—can I say that here? And as soon as the filters were put on, he had some zip back—can I say “zip”? You have to watch what you say here. But he had some zip back.

These are farm families. Their cattle and milking business is their livelihood, and they're taking huge financial hits when the cattle cannot produce, let alone when they get sick, incurring vet bills for no known illness.

We wonder 10 years later why we are here talking about this again. I know the member from Mississauga had said that we have more discussion going on, and they want to talk some more. And I know there's a pilot project in my riding, in Little Britain, and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture is involved in the pilot project. But I can only say that if I'm here another 10 years and speaking to this issue, what we have done?

The member has brought forward a bill. He's worked extremely hard and talked to people across the province—

Mr. Bob Delaney: We're going to pass it.

Ms. Laurie Scott: We're going to pass it, but what are you going to do with it? That's what we keep saying: Do something.

We've got copious amounts of information. I can give you more if you're lacking information, because my office has a ton of it. They're real people, real businesses. They're losing their livelihoods, their family farms.

The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane: It's always great to hear him speak. As a dairy farmer himself—I can't outdo his great speeches in the Legislature. But we're saying to the government: Please act now. The bureaucracy is too much. The farmers can't get the help they need in any timely fashion. Again I say: To pass the bill would be great, but actually doing something about it would be of the most benefit to the farmers. I thank them again for coming down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's my pleasure to be able to rise today to express my support for my colleague and his private member's bill, the Elimination of Ground Current Pollution Act.

Many jurisdictions in North America have tackled this issue of ground current to protect livestock health, as well as human health. As we've heard over and over again, it's time—it's past time—that Ontario gets serious about this issue.

I had a call from one of my constituents asking me if I would be supporting this, to which, of course, I said yes. She expressed concerns similar to those which we've heard, as a member of the dairy farming community. The stray voltage made her cows sick and resulted in them underperforming. She was lucky that none of her cows died, but it did happen to others. Perhaps most frustrating for her was the lack of interest on the end of her local electricity provider. Quite simply, they did not take her concerns seriously. A friend of hers developed testing equipment to measure what voltage came on the farm. Even with evidence in her hand, it took months for her hydro provider to admit that there was a problem.

So what does it mean? It means that with four wet feet on cement, the cows are getting shocked. It impacts how they eat, drink and reproduce, and in serious cases, they can die. They are getting shocked all the time. If a cow gets shocked every time she goes to get a drink, she will either stop drinking or only do so when she is desperate, so this becomes an animal welfare issue as much as an economic issue.

The bill is about respect for the animals, respect for farmers, and respect for property owners. It's certainly a pleasure for me to support my constituents in York-Simcoe through this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have for debate on this bill. I will return now to the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex to respond to the debate this afternoon.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: First of all, I would like to thank the members from Toronto-Danforth, Timiskaming-Cochrane, Durham, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Mississauga-Streetsville and, of course, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for their insightfulness in terms of this particular bill. I also want to give a special shout-out again to members of our farming community who are here today. They know that we care about their farming business. We care about your animals. We want to see you successful.

I have been very passionate about this for the last four years. I've done research; we've had round-table discussions. I've been part of testing that's been going on. To me, it's the right thing to do. I take my critic role very seriously, especially when it comes to community safety.

You heard me say earlier, Speaker, that when you know you're doing the right thing, you can't go wrong.

To the members in this Legislature, I say: Let's not punish those who feed us. We need to stand strong and

support our farming communities. Let's tackle the hot spots first.

To my colleagues from all parties in the Ontario Legislature, as you vote to pass Bill 161 at its second reading, I want you to think about farming in Ontario. I want you to think about your family, your children, your grandchildren and your neighbours, now and for future generations to come. A "yes" vote will save lives, animal and human.

If Bill 161 passes, it needs to be brought up in committee sooner rather than later. I will be persistent in ensuring that it comes out of committee, goes into third reading and eventually receives royal assent, so that we can now and forever address this issue of ground current pollution in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the debates on the private members' ballot items for this afternoon. The time provided for private members' public business has expired. We're now going to proceed to the votes.

SAVING THE GIRL
NEXT DOOR ACT, 2016
LOI DE 2016 SUR LA SAUVEGARDE
DES JEUNES FILLES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We will deal first with ballot item number 15, standing in the name of Ms. Scott.

Ms. Scott has moved second reading of Bill 158, An Act to enact the Human Trafficking Awareness Day Act, 2016 and the Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act, 2016 and to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House, unless the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock—

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like it referred to the justice committee, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Ms. Scott is asking that the bill be referred to the justice committee. Agreed? Agreed.

LIFE LEASE ACT, 2016
LOI DE 2016 SUR LES BAUX VIAGERS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Now we're going to proceed to the next vote.

Ms. Hoggarth has moved second reading of Bill 160, An Act to regulate life leases.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House, unless the member for Barrie—

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'd like it to go to private bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Barrie is requesting that the bill be referred to the committee on regulations and private bills. Agreed? Agreed.

1610

ELIMINATION OF GROUND CURRENT
POLLUTION ACT, 2016
LOI DE 2016 SUR L'ÉLIMINATION
DE L'ÉLECTROPOLLUTION DU SOL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The third one: Mr. Nicholls has moved second reading of Bill 161, An Act to prohibit harmful electrical ground current.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I think I heard a no.

All those in favour of the notion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House. I look to the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex to—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I would move that Bill 161 go to the committee on general government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Nicholls is asking that the bill be referred to the committee on general government. Agreed? Agreed.

APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF MEDICAL
OFFICER OF HEALTH

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for orders of the day, I wish to inform the House that we have today laid upon the table order in council 242-2016, appointing Dr. David Williams as the Chief Medical Officer of Health for the province of Ontario.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WASTE-FREE ONTARIO ACT, 2016
LOI DE 2016 FAVORISANT
UN ONTARIO SANS DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 17, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to enact the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016 and the Waste Diversion Transition Act, 2016 and to repeal the Waste Diversion

Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant la Loi de 2016 sur la récupération des ressources et l'économie circulaire et la Loi transitoire de 2016 sur le réacheminement des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the member for Huron-Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to pick up where I left off yesterday, because it's important that all sides of the coin with regard to Bill 151 are looked at.

You might recall, Speaker, that I left off yesterday expressing concerns around how WDO is going to be enveloped into—or, maybe more appropriately put, slid into—the new authority that Bill 151 will be creating. And I worry; I worry that without a cost-containment plan, once WDO becomes an authority, its budget could grow by millions and millions of dollars, with little to no explanation.

This is exactly why WDO should be scrapped. If producers are individually responsible for recycling, they don't need WDO interfering in their operations, complicating procedures and duplicating the ministry's responsibilities. All the government needs to make this system work is an agency to collect and analyze data and report any potential violations to the ministry's enforcement branch. We don't need a policy shop duplicating the job of the ministry.

And, Speaker, by reading Bill 151, you would think that the Liberals forgot their own report on the need for regulatory clarity on the roles of WDO and the ministry. In fact, the Liberals admitted that the overlap and duplication between WDO and the ministry have gotten so bad over the years that it's impossible to effectively maintain accountability. Still, the Liberals have put forward a bill that continues to be the very problem that they identified just a few years ago. This problem crops up in several areas of Bill 151, but we are particularly concerned with sections 13 and 14 of schedule 2.

For instance, let's consider the process for the development and approval of windup plans. Under section 14, the minister may direct an IFO to develop a plan to wind up a recycling plan. Upon the minister's direction, the IFO must determine who it believes will be affected by the windup plan and consult with those individuals. At the same time, the authority must determine who it believes will be affected and consult with those very individuals. The authority must then review the IFO's windup plan for the approval, but the authority cannot approve the plan unless it's consistent with the minister's direction. If consistent, the authority can approve the plan and send it to the minister. However, if the minister wants to change the plan, he can require the IFO to make those changes. Do you see what the frustration is in terms of how this is being set up?

Speaker, after the IFO receives the authority's approved plan or the amended plan, it must implement it within the timeline set by the minister and the conditions set by the authority. Once that plan is implemented, the

IFO must prepare a final report to the authority and the ministry.

I'm sure all of you feel a bit lost hearing an explanation of the windup process. Just imagine what it's like to be a business that's regulated within this senseless maze of bureaucracy.

This is a very troublesome area within this particular bill. We would suggest that, instead of investing in new business opportunities, companies will have to set aside funds to invest in regulatory compliance. That is not what we need in 2016 in this province. Is it really any surprise that businesses are greatly concerned with this section of the bill? We all know this is a bureaucratic disaster just waiting to happen, and the irony is that it duplicates all of the same problems that the government has already identified.

That's why we believe that WDO should have no role in windup plans. The ministry should deal directly with the industry funding organizations to wind up the electronics, used tires and Orange Drop programs as soon as possible. The ministry should work directly with the industry and municipalities—the two of them together, industry and municipalities—to seamlessly transition the Blue Box Program under the new framework.

It's time to get WDO out of the way and let the government assume its role as the regulator and allow industry to assume its responsibility for recycling. Unfortunately, though, the Liberals can't fully accept the role of government as a regulator and the role of the private sector as an innovator. For whatever reason, they want control.

Speaker, consider the board selection process for the authority. This is another troublesome area that stakeholders have identified. Section 25 of schedule 1 outlines the process for appointing the authority's board members. Get this: To select the membership, the minister appoints five members, who then get to elect six members. Just to recap, so everybody gets this straight: The minister's five appointees get to pick six more members. I know the question you'll have: If the minister wants to control the board, why doesn't he just come out and say he'll be selecting all 11 members? To think that these five appointees won't be taking their marching orders from the minister to select the next six members defies all common sense.

Clearly, if businesses are going to take on full responsibility for recycling, the membership of the authority should reflect those industries; otherwise, the board could be stacked with their Liberal friends. We've seen it happen before. But in this particular case, the board could be stacked against the very businesses that are stepping up to the plate to increase recycling in our province.

Speaker, government should work to create the right conditions for businesses to succeed, not set the conditions for a perpetual fight with the authority.

Again, the minister is accountable, and the ministry needs to assume responsibility for oversight and enforcement to increase recycling.

That brings me to my next point: enforcement. Rather than having the environment ministry's enforcement

branch enforce the law, the Liberals want to create a new department of inspectors—or we could refer to them specifically as waste cops, because an extra layer of bureaucracy is an absolute waste. Specifically, section 47 of schedule 1 gives the authority a new enforcement branch, along with the power to conduct searches, seize documents and issue fines. I know what you're thinking: Isn't that the job of the ministry's enforcement branch? Aren't they more than capable of enforcing the law? These are valid questions that, unfortunately, have no valid answers from the Liberals.

For whatever reason, this government doesn't seem to have the faith that we have in the professionalism of Ontario's enforcement officers. We know that the hard-working men and women at the ministry's enforcement branch will do a great job of making sure everyone plays by the rules. They have the experience, the expertise and the mandate to get the job done. They don't need to stand on the sidelines while a new force of waste cops takes over.

1620

This is the same approach taken by the BC Liberals. They rely on their environment ministry's enforcement branch to enforce the law, and look at their results. BC has a diversion rate of close to 40%, while Ontario lags behind and is stalled at a mere 25%. The facts speak for themselves. There is absolutely no reason why the Ontario Liberals need to be reinventing the wheel here. Again, the government, not the authority, should be responsible for oversight and enforcement.

Probably, when we think about this a little bit further, one of the more troubling aspects of this bill is the assumption that Ontario, on its own, can influence global supply chains through regulations. It's a very naive notion, I would tend to say, but let's examine this a bit further.

Under section 67, the government of Ontario would have the authority to tell multinational companies how to design their products and packaging. Do you really think multinationals will allow an Ontario jurisdiction to tell them how they're going to package and pull through products and brands that are going to be sold on a multinational basis? Really? Again, it's a naive initiative. How could this realistically work? It's a mystery to most, but that's what the bill says.

This section, again, goes back to the Liberals' central planning approach to government. But Ontarians understand that it's not the government's role to sit at a company's boardroom table and dictate product and packaging design. They know central planning does not work. Yet the Liberals remain offside with common sense. Even worse, their ideology and their approach to government has caused them to overlook serious considerations about food packaging.

When I was general manager of the Ontario Dairy Goat Co-operative, we were looking to innovate. We were looking to add value for the commodity of goat milk. I can tell you that with every grocery store we met with we had to, when considering product development,

think about not only the CFIA rules that dictate packaging at the federal level; we had to think about the multinational schematic of how they lay out their products. When you go to a dairy counter in a grocery store, it's not happenstance as to how they lay out and identify the various brands of milk or the various brands of cottage cheese. It's all executed by design, and a lot of time has gone into that calculation. Again, I just shake my head thinking that this government could actually think they could control product and packaging of multinationals.

Let's go back to CFIA for a second. I really need to stress this: Food packaging is federally regulated by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, specifically under the Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act. The mandate of CFIA is to ensure that food sold in Canada is safe for Canadians. So how are the Liberals—and actually, I'm going to back up there. Another thing: When we were looking at product development in terms of adding value to goat milk, a big thing that multinationals looked at was shelf life. You had to search and research and do your work to make sure you had the proper packaging that would sustain and support the expected shelf life that multinationals wanted if you were going to ever be looked at to go onto their shelves. That's fair.

Again, the mandate of CFIA is to ensure that food sold in Canada is safe for Canadians. How are the Liberals going to work out regulatory overlap, duplication and conflict with federal rules concerning food safety? I think the answer is simple. That answer is, they just don't know. This is a major concern that needs answers now, not when a regulation is drafted behind closed doors.

Then there's the issue of overall competitiveness. Businesses in Ontario are already facing high taxes, excessive red tape and skyrocketing electricity rates. Many have chosen to pack up their operations and move to more competitive jurisdictions so they can remain profitable. We're seeing greenhouses do it, we've seen manufacturers do it, and there's going to be more.

This is an issue that our party repeatedly raised, and we specifically raised it during the debate on Bill 91. We particularly highlighted the case of the Heinz manufacturing plant in Leamington, outside of Windsor. Heinz had pleaded with the Liberal government to do a cost assessment on the Waste Reduction Act so it could determine the impact on its operations. The Liberals refused to provide any cost analysis whatsoever, and as a result Heinz had the worst to fear. Shortly after that, the company announced that it would be shutting its doors after more than 100 years of doing business in Ontario.

In 2014, this closure put hundreds of hard-working men and women out of work in southern Ontario. Thankfully, the Liberals dropped Bill 91 before any more damage could be done to Ontario's economy. Likewise, the Liberals should also drop any provisions in Bill 151 that will kill jobs and hurt our economy. Designing products for a global company is a good place to start.

The government must understand that many of the outcomes it is seeking are already happening in the

marketplace at a natural pace. Industry, through the laws of supply and demand, is taking action to increase sustainability, and businesses are stepping up to the plate to take on their responsibility for recycling. In terms of standards, we're also hearing that people are being mindful, when it comes to trade, of the products and how they're produced, and they're taking a look, in terms of how products are being produced, with regard to emissions. Climate change is going to be taken into consideration, and countries and jurisdictions that are manufacturing and producing products, being mindful of climate change, might have a few extra trade doors open. We need to be thinking about that.

We have to admit that if government creates the right conditions for growth in the green economy through environmental standards and recycling targets, there is no need to have the minister designing the next laptop for Dell or the next set of tires for Goodyear or new packaging for groceries. This government needs to assume its role as a regulator and let the private sector decide how to design its products and run its business.

Another area of the bill that will have unintended consequences is part II. Policy statements are a new addition to the waste diversion debate in Ontario, and they clearly have not been fully thought through. In fact, the Liberals haven't even told us how many policy statements they intend to introduce. They claim, like with many other sections of Bill 151, that everything will be worked out once it's passed into law. Well, Speaker, we just can't trust them to get it right, and we disagree with them on this account. Ontarians need to know the potential effects of these policy statements now, not once it's too late. Think of the effect the provincial policy statement has had across Ontario.

I want to conclude by saying that we're concerned about Bill 151. We applaud this Liberal government for adapting many good ideas that the PC party came forward with in our plan when we debated Bill 91, but we need to think about this. Our position is clear: We welcome the policy reversal by the government, because they adopted many of our ideas, and we support elements within Bill 151 that reflect good business modelling, but we have to ensure that government stays out of the way of business leading and increasing recycling in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): The time is now available for questions and comments. I invite the MPP for Bramalea–Gore–Malton. You have the floor.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: First and foremost, to frame the argument, I think it's important to lay out some of the arguments here.

As a member of the New Democratic Party, and personally, I strongly support initiatives to protect the environment. I think it's important that we all accept that as a starting point.

In addition to that, we all need to acknowledge, as we move forward, that it's going to become more and more important for us to develop increased initiatives to prevent waste; to look at ways reusing and ways of reducing our carbon footprint and our footprint broadly

speaking. These are important initiatives; these are important issues to talk about.

1630

The manner in which we do it will require us to work with other partners. One of the key issues that was brought up by the member's speech is that, in any sort of initiative where we need to work with various partners, we need to have an open dialogue with those partners to ensure that the solutions we propose will actually work. If we propose solutions that don't take into consideration the realities of the various players, that type of solution-making is not going to work. I think that's an important issue raised by the member.

However, I submit that in any of our decision-making, we need to start with a principle, and the principle is that climate change, waste generation—reduction of that generation of waste has to be a key priority in this province, it has to be a key priority in this country, and in fact it needs to be a key priority in the world.

The reality is that we've left a great and, in many cases, a negative impact on our environment. As a society, we need to take steps to remedy that problem.

I look forward to other solutions, I look forward to other initiatives, other bills, and how we can actually, in a very vigorous way, address the serious impact we've left on the environment and remedy that moving forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): The floor is now open for further questions and comments.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to see that some positive conversation is happening about Bill 151 in this Legislature.

As the member from Huron–Bruce indicated in her speech, waste diversion is very important to her and to her riding, as well creating jobs. Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, this is an economic bill. It will create jobs and it will boost the economy of Ontario by recovering more resources from waste materials, and thereby it will create jobs.

I would like to say that the Waste Diversion Act, 2002, which was passed by the Tories, created monopolies that set fees. All those organizations will be removed under the new legislation and replaced with a new system, a new model—the producer responsibility model—for the end of the life of their product and packaging.

I would like to say that we have consulted extensively with the stakeholders and have heard that these changes are wanted and are necessary to move from the stalled 25% diversion rates we are at today.

The potential growth rate and economic implications of an open market in recyclables and resources are vast. It will not only have huge economic benefits, it will also have environmental benefits. It's a positive step in the right direction, and I support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): The floor is now open for questions and comments. The MPP from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I live in such an easy riding that you don't have to look at your map of all the desks in the

Legislature that we're always consulting for some of the more complicated ones.

I'm pleased to rise and say a few words on the Waste-Free Ontario Act, Bill 151. I just feel that we have to lead by example. One way we can do that is—we have been testing for over a year, I believe, using iPads here in the Legislature. Instead of implementing that—many of us have iPads at our own disposal, or other tablets—here we are: I've got papers and papers and papers all over the place. It's a shame. It's a shame, Mr. Speaker, that we're not able to do more to use less paper products right here in the Legislature. Isn't that ironical when we're speaking about having a waste-free Ontario?

I think we can do a lot more, not just by leading as an example, but using a carrot instead of a stick. Let's promote companies, let's use our abilities to offer awards, to use social media, and promote the companies that are reducing waste. None of us like to see a huge cardboard box filled with more cardboard and more paper, and all that's inside is a little CD case. None of us like to see that.

In terms of trying to figure out regulations for that, it gets complicated because maybe there are other products that are going to be going in there at a later date or are going in there in other jurisdictions. Companies have to deal with the fact that we're bilingual, and that makes life difficult for many. We don't want to do anything to have a little box that the companies have to, literally and figuratively, manage within. Let's see that we can do more in terms of leading by example and offering incentives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): The floor is now open for further questions and comments. I recognize the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in this House.

Today is my first opportunity to speak on Bill 151, the Waste-Free Ontario Act, and to comment on the comments from the member from Huron-Bruce.

I listened intently to the last few minutes of her comments. The one thing I took away from her comments, and that I would like to echo, is that we are all concerned about the environment; we are all concerned about minimizing the impact we have on the environment. The one thing that we need to make sure of with this legislation, as with all legislation, is that actually there is more to the legislation than just convincing people that it's doing something. The title is good, but we need to make sure that the workings are going to have the desired impact.

I heard from one of the members across that this is a "totally new way of doing things, new and improved." Often, when you have "new and improved," you have a lot of glitches and a lot of problems. We all have to make sure that it actually works. I say this all the time on other issues: It's great to make rules and regulations in this fine place, but we have to be absolutely sure they're going to work outside of this place.

To echo the last member who was speaking: She made a good point, because a lot of times companies—and I

know; I used to farm. We didn't package things because we wanted to spend more money on packaging or because—we always had a reason. We have to make sure that we do the best we can to make sure there aren't needless reasons to do things.

If we all concentrate on that, then we can all work together towards that goal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Further questions and comments, all members?

I now return to the MPP for Huron-Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate the comments we heard from the members from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, from Mississauga-Brampton South, from my colleague in Thornhill and from my friend from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

We all care about the environment, no matter what any party would like to have people believe. We want to do what's best, and what's best is how the Liberals embraced our good ideas that we put forward when we debated Bill 91. Bill 91 was an unequivocal disaster, and the only way they were able to recover from that is by embracing the great ideas that we put forward, and we're not going to stop.

We like what we see, for the most part, in Bill 151, because they have embraced PC ideas in how to entice and encourage industry to increase recycling rates and waste diversion. We also have concerns as well, and we need to discuss those concerns a little bit more.

Those concerns are simply, in the spirit of reducing, let's reduce bureaucracy; let's reduce red tape. I say that genuinely to the people across the hall, and in doing so, let's just scrap eco tax programs that are doing nothing but increasing the cost of doing business in Ontario. Those eco tax programs, specifically, are Ontario Tire Stewardship—we all know how well that organization has been doing lately—e-waste and Orange Drop.

If we can drop those eco tax programs, totally forget about WDO, and think about the following: have a government that sets targets and sets standards, and then gets out of the way to let industry lead, I think then we're on track.

1640

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Toronto-Danforth.

Hon. James J. Bradley: This will be much better.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the note of confidence expressed by the member from St. Catharines.

We're in bad shape in Ontario when it comes to waste diversion. I don't think there's any argument on that. We need action on this issue. I'm hopeful that there are some elements of this bill that may be useful, but I have substantial concerns about the bill in its current form.

As you're well aware, Speaker, little has been done by the Liberal government on this issue since they were elected in 2003, and Ontario has lost out economically and environmentally because of their lack of action.

Today, we're debating the government's new waste bill, Waste-Free Ontario Act, 2015. Before we look at the bill, let's review the situation we're in.

I'm going to start by quoting the words of the member for Mississauga—Brampton South, who delivered a big chunk of the Liberal leadoff speech on this bill the other day. She noted—and this backs up my argument—that we face very profound challenges in this province on waste. “In the residential sector, 47% of household waste is diverted from landfills, but the rate for the rest of the economy is much, much lower. Existing waste diversion programs cover only 15% of Ontario’s waste stream, and over the last decade, our overall waste diversion rate has stalled at 25%.”

Speaker, as you may well be aware, the Blue Box Program was something that was in place largely in the 1990s. It spread a bit, but really, the bulk of what was done to allow action on recycling in Ontario was done before this government came to power in 2003. In that time from 2003—and now it's 2016, 13 years—we have had stagnation, and stagnation that people have noticed. I mean, it isn't as though no one ever commented on the fact that nothing was happening or no one ever noticed that the government seemed paralyzed on this issue.

We in this party have certainly raised it a number of times. We have raised it in the House; we have raised it in the media. We've known for a long time that Ontario was increasing its greenhouse gas emissions because of the failure to address the waste issue, and it was letting economic opportunity pass Ontario by.

This is what the minister himself had to say about the greenhouse gas impact from our current waste management approach. He said this in his leadoff speech: “In Ontario, absolute greenhouse gas emissions from waste increased by 25% between 1990 and 2012.” That's pretty substantial.

We saw drops in greenhouse gas emissions from the industrial sector that were very substantial from 1990 to 2012—very substantial. From the waste management file, one where the government had an awful lot of control, a lot of ability in terms of passing legislation and not a lot of concerns about international competitiveness, we saw very substantial increases in emissions. “In 2013, the Ontario waste sector was responsible for nine megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, 5% of the provincial total; 93% of those emissions came from waste sent to landfills.”

Speaker, that is a bad record. That is a bad record. I was here in 2007 when Dalton McGuinty talked about climate change as being the defining issue of our times, an issue that demanded action for ourselves and for future generations, and yet, frankly, virtually nothing was done on this issue from 2007 to today. The issue still hangs fire.

I want to note as well that failure to act, setting aside climate change for a moment—it's a big issue to set aside, but an issue I'll set aside for a moment. If we do not, in fact, get the waste issue under control, we're looking at 16 new landfills that will need to be sited in Ontario between now and 2050. That comes from the government's own draft strategy. Anyone in this Legislature who has ever had to deal with landfill issues—my

colleague from Timiskaming may speak to this—knows that the siting of 16 more landfills in Ontario is not going to be very popular, aside from the fact that environmentally it's a huge step backwards.

We need to be taking substantial action to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, to reduce our waste production. We need to have waste diversion numbers that will eliminate the need for new landfills in this province. There's no question that we need to act on this issue and there's no question that we've needed to act for a long time.

The bill before us has some useful elements. The NDP supports the bill's aim of making producers pay for the waste they produce. No question in my mind: If you're making a car, an umbrella, a chest of drawers or some electronic piece of equipment, the fact that you don't have to deal with the cost of disposal increases your profits.

Speaker, producers who make goods that are efficient, reusable and long-lived should be rewarded, and those who make disposable junk that will just simply pile into landfills and drive up people's costs and reduce their standard of living should not be rewarded. They should be forced to pay extra costs.

There's broad support in this province for individual producer responsibility, in which producers pay the full cost of end-of-life management of their products and packaging. We may well have disagreements as we go through debate in this bill as to exactly how that's done; we may have disagreements as to whether or not this bill is adequate to reach that goal. But I would say there's general agreement in this society and likely in this House that individual producers need to be responsible for the cost of their products throughout their lifespan.

Now, individual producer responsibility is an issue and an item for action that is long overdue. Since the passage of the Waste Diversion Act in 2002, waste diversion programs in Ontario have been controlled by industry-funded monopolies. These monopolies have lacked incentives to find creative ways to reduce packaging and divert waste from landfills. As a result, there has been little innovation in waste reduction and recycling, and only four waste diversion programs have been created in 14 years. Too much of our waste keeps going to landfill.

Action on individual producer responsibility makes tons of sense. If you're at home watching this, you realize that the person who has made a profit on the item they've sold you should also be taking the cost on disposing of that item when it's at the end of its lifespan. No question; common sense, I would say. Every party in this House supports that and, my guess is, the overwhelming majority of the population of Ontario.

I also want to note—and the member for Huron—Bruce was there; the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change was there; I was there at the Paris climate summit, in December, Conference of Parties 21, convened by the United Nations. That was a very sobering event. I've followed this issue for a long time. I have

some sense of the scale of the difficulties that we face, but I actually found the conversations with climate scientists and the workshops that I attended to be very sobering in terms of the scale and speed with which this issue is moving.

So for us, looking at this particular waste reduction act, there's no question that having a keen regard for the climate aspect of waste reduction is very substantial, and that is something that has to be reflected, I believe, in the government's approach to this whole bill—to its whole operations—but it has to be reflected in this bill.

We all know that we get greenhouse gases coming from landfills where organic waste gets chewed up by microbes that expel methane and heat up the planet. But we also know that when you make useless goods that are transported on roads, causing huge amounts of emissions from transportation, you're creating more greenhouse gas emissions. If you have a society that is not being run efficiently—if producers, for instance, aren't running their factories in a way that maximizes the use of each kilo of raw material that comes in, generating waste—then you have an operation that's contributing to climate change. I think, both from a climate perspective and from a business perspective, a high level of efficiency makes tons of sense—tons of sense.

Without individual producer responsibility, producers can just pass on the cost of waste management to consumers. They can pass on the cost of their inefficiency. They aren't going to have that incentive to design for reduce and recycling, and they need to have an incentive for reuse and recycling. Instead of creative solutions to dealing with waste, what we've dealt with have been eco fees.

1650

I have to say that the former Minister of the Environment, John Gerretsen, had to deal with and defend the whole eco fees approach right about the time the HST came into force here in Ontario. I went to the media conference that day, and I have to say I've rarely seen a minister put on the griddle so effectively by the Queen's Park press gallery. They turned him over a few times to make sure he was extraordinarily well done, and then they just flamed him up for a few more minutes before they finally let him go.

Eco fees have not done what's needed in Ontario. They have provided a cover for inefficient producers, because they are flat-rate, right? I'll go into this a bit further, but they're flat-rate. If you design an item that is extraordinarily efficient in terms of material—can be reused, can be repaired, can have its life extended—your product gets stuck with the same eco fee as that of someone who's producing junk.

The eco fee system, because it doesn't actually reward the high-efficiency, innovative design producers, and it gives protection to those who would never fit those categories, has been a failure. In the end, it has meant that the whole cost of dealing with disposal falls on the shoulders of the citizens and the businesses of this province, and doesn't fall on the shoulders of those who push the stuff out the door.

Speaker, as you're well aware, there are significant economic opportunities and environmental benefits from waste reduction—and I emphasize reduction—significant benefits from reuse, and then, down the list but a term more commonly used, recycling. Reduction is absolutely our best bet and we need to have a society that thinks in those terms.

There is no doubt that there are some initiatives here that Ontario needs. But what worries me and should worry other members of this Legislature, and not just those on this side of the House but those on the government side of the House, is that this is just enabling legislation. There are no timelines in this bill. I've seen bills come before that were adopted to great fanfare, great enthusiasm, great excitement that finally something was being done. I'll say the cap-and-trade legislation that we passed in 2009, which may well be in place in 2017, fits that category.

There are no timelines in this bill. It makes me wonder about the effectiveness of this bill, because when there are no timelines, if the government, upon passage of the bill, upon proclamation of the bill, decides that it's facing political difficulties and doesn't want to actually push through—and I'll note that the clock to the next election is now ticking down. It's 2016. We saw the announcement about wine in grocery stores; I guess it was this morning. Man, if anything says countdown to an election, that says it. Through an alcohol fog, one can see the emerging outline of the next campaign.

Mr. John Vanthof: In the next federal campaign, it will be smoke.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes, it will be smoke and wine.

Ms. Mangat, in her remarks, had this to say: "If the proposed legislation is passed, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change anticipates that the transition of the municipal hazardous or special waste program, waste electrical and electronic equipment program, and Used Tires Program could be complete within two to four years. However, the transition of the Blue Box Program may take longer, as government, municipalities and producers would need to discuss the transition process extensively to ensure that residents continue to receive convenient and accessible collection services."

I will give Ms. Mangat this credit: She actually talked about the substance of the bill in her leadoff remarks. I'm not going to be nasty in my remarks about the Minister of the Environment, but he was much more general about the bill, much more high-level. Ms. Mangat actually talked about the content, the timelines, how this is going to be put in place on the ground.

Now, I have to say, that noted, that a timeline of two to four years for the non-Blue Box changes takes you to just past the next election date and a bit further than that. So it puts you in a great position, because you can say that you passed the bill and you're going to deal with the issue, but you don't actually deal with the rubber-hits-the-road stuff until maybe a day or two after the election, after the ballots are counted.

Interjections

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I've been around; I've noticed how you guys operate. I know how it works now.

If substantial changes to the Blue Box Program are delayed for more than four years, it takes us to 2020 or 2021—it takes us into the next decade—so I have to ask, could the government defer action forever on this? I think the answer is, yup, they sure could. They sure could.

The success or failure of this act, assuming it actually gets implemented, will depend on policies and regulations that have not yet been disclosed. In fact, after disclosure, they won't have to come back to the Legislature for debate or review. Speaker, that too is a substantial worry, because, really, the elements that all of us will have to deal with in our ridings, in terms of our individual constituents who are dealing with waste issues and individual businesses or institutions that are dealing with waste issues—all of those substantial pieces will not be subject to review by the people in this chamber. We won't get a chance to say, "That makes no sense whatsoever," or on the off chance, say, "Hey, that was actually pretty good." It won't be in our hands.

I have to say that this comes up as an issue for me in my riding when people come and say, "You voted for this piece of legislation, and yet this regulation, this actual piece of law on the ground that affects us, makes no sense at all." I have to say, "You know, the legislation was headed in the right direction; I can't help it if the regulations that were put in place are really pretty dicey." That's a problem with this bill: The lack of detail, the setting in place of a framework without filling in that framework so that we know exactly what we're going to be launching is a problem, a worry, a concern.

I note, Speaker, that the government proposed individual producer responsibility back in 2008. Now, time's a-passing; 2008, eight years ago, was a while ago, and little has changed. Little has changed. Nothing changes the day after this bill passes. Industry-funded organizations will still control our waste diversion programs. That will still be the case the day after the Speaker calls for the vote and we all get to stand in our place voting yea or nay. The day after that, those industry-funded organizations will still control our waste diversion programs. This bill sets no timeline for when Ontario will even begin moving toward full individual producer responsibility.

I listened to Ms. Mangat and her comments earlier on the member from Huron-Bruce's leadoff speech, and she talked about extensive consultation that had taken place. Frankly, having talked to my colleague Jonah Schein, who was here for Bill 91, I have no doubt that extraordinarily detailed conversation and consultation has taken place. There's enough heat on this file and enough people had a big interest that it wasn't going to be one that was just going to simply be cooked up in a few minutes and put steaming onto a plate for those of us in the Legislature to read. No, there was a lot of consultation.

So I have to ask, if all that has taken place, why haven't timelines been set? If one knows where all the different players are at and what their concerns and issues

are, why haven't those concerns and issues been reflected in far more concrete legislation that is put before us for consideration?

I want to note, Speaker, that despite its title, Bill 151 fails to establish a legislated goal of zero waste. What is this again? The Waste-Free Ontario Act, 2015? That's pretty much it in terms of mentioning "waste-free." It doesn't show up as a goal within the legislation. It doesn't show up as a target. Why aren't we setting targets and timelines for a waste-free society? Why isn't that reflected in the legislation? It's a very substantial question about the effectiveness of and, ultimately, the direction of this act.

1700

Now, I'm going to be talking in greater detail about the bill, but I want to draw back a bit and talk about the larger framework for thinking about waste issues.

Happily, I have the opportunity to draw on a speech that was delivered by our former environment critic, former member for Davenport Jonah Schein, who had an opportunity, when Bill 91 was on the floor, to make a presentation to the Municipal Waste Association. He talked about the principles and the considerations that need to be taken into account when you're putting together a waste diversion or a waste management bill. He said at the time that New Democrats welcomed a new waste diversion act—absolutely true—and he hoped to see a bill that would increase accountability and transparency in the waste management sector, a bill that would protect our environment and foster a green economy.

As he said, New Democrats have always supported key principles around waste diversion and recovery. The first principle is accountability. As I'd said earlier, the polluter, not the consumer, is the one who's accountable for or responsible for the product. You've got to have that or, as we have seen, costs for dealing with waste just run out of control, and the consequences of dealing with waste—and I'll cite having a landfill put in place near where you live or where you work as one of those consequence—are very substantial.

We support the idea that the producer is responsible for the full life cycle of the product. That's extended producer responsibility. The producer of a product must internalize the full cost of their product's life cycle.

Secondly, incentives need to be created so it is easy for consumers and producers alike to do the right thing for our environment.

Thirdly, we need properly informed and enforced regulations to incentivize waste recovery and the protection of our environment. If you have some of the most beautiful legislation ever written, legislation that would be regarded as fine literature in many other languages, and you don't enforce it, then as beautiful as it may be, it is irrelevant, and it's absolutely the case. You have to have regulations that make sense and that people understand very easily, very quickly, there's no confusion about what's being regulated, and then you have to have the resources in place to make sure there actually is an adhesion to the law.

I have to say that my experience with the Archives and Recordkeeping Act here in this Legislature—it was pretty clear that in the course of the gas plant inquiry, we questioned quite a few Liberal staff who very happily destroyed every record they put their hands on. There was no enforcement of the act, and so there were no consequences. It was a useful experience for me. I hadn't really thought before about the laws on the books that had no enforcement whatsoever. I was familiar with laws that got enforced sporadically or poorly, but laws that had no enforcement whatsoever, whose only function was to look pretty on the shelf—that was new to me. So, making sure there's adequate and substantial enforcement for regulation is going to be a critical part of any bill that's worth its salt.

Fourthly, the market has a key role to play. We have to create the market conditions where environmentally conscious, smart and innovative practices and products are encouraged and profitable. It makes complete sense. People aren't going to sell products into Ontario that don't make money. Those who are making smart products that make sense environmentally should be rewarded, and those who don't should be discouraged.

I have to say that Mr. Schein was right when he said, "I think it's safe to say there is a broad consensus that we need to do better on waste reduction in Ontario." Not only is it the right thing to do for our environment—our air, our land and our water—but waste reduction recovery offers huge potential economic benefits in terms of job creation. Recycling creates seven to 10 jobs for every one job in the disposal industry. That's an extraordinary number. According to some estimates, deposit return programs create even more jobs.

Even now, years after the crash of 2008, when I go and talk to my constituents, I find people who have a very difficult time getting work. My guess is that if you surveyed all the members in this chamber on a day when it's completely full, you would find that they came across the same problem. When we have an opportunity to create meaningful and environmentally beneficial work in recycling or reuse, we should be doing that.

As I've noted, waste diversion rates in Ontario are stuck around 25%, far below any publicly stated provincial target and far below other provinces. Why? Why has that been the case? Mr. Schein noted that a large problem has been a lack of enforceable targets. Even though Ontario has been stuck at low diversion rates, the government has not created the tools necessary to ensure producers' compliance with these targets. Individual producers have been provided little economic incentive to reduce waste or make their products more environmentally friendly. As long as it is cheaper and easier for companies to send materials to the dump instead of reusing those materials, reducing those materials or recycling them, we'll continue to fail to meet our waste diversion obligations.

Of course, the handling of eco fees has been quite a failure. This is something he said a few years ago and was said by me a few years before that and, I have no

doubt, was said by others a few years before that. It has burdened Ontarians with costs they should not have to pay, but it has also rocked the confidence of the public in government recycling programs.

When the government allows producers to pass on the cost of disposing of their products to consumers through eco fees, there's no incentive for change or green innovation for these producers. On top of that, the government failed to produce a nuanced program of differential costs for different products. I touched on that earlier. If you make a product that's easily reused, repurposed or repaired, you should be spending far less and should have to charge people far less than a product that is none of the above.

I have to say that Mr. Schein noted that inadequate monitoring by the provincial government means that we don't have a real sense of how effective waste management programs are. What we do know is that producers pay less than half of recycling costs in many municipalities.

Speaker, as you're well aware, municipalities are hard pressed across Ontario. There may be one or two that aren't, and I look forward to hearing from them, but when I talk to city councillors here in Toronto or in any other part of the province, they find it hard to pull all the pieces together. They don't need an extra expense around waste management. They need support from those producers who are passing the costs on to the public and to the municipalities that represent them.

Mr. Schein also noted that there's a problem with waste materials being dumped in Ontario—no question—but also a problem with export of those waste materials overseas, often to China and often to situations where there's inadequate worker health and safety, inadequate protection for the environment and large-scale dumping of toxic materials. That's not environmentally or ecologically responsible; that's just passing the problem down the line to someone else who's perhaps desperate for work and desperate for income.

We're a sophisticated society, technologically and economically. We have the ability to set up a waste management or waste diversion system that will allow us to avoid that pollution and allow us to reduce and recover materials.

We believe that materials can be diverted. We believe that disposal bans should be considered and put in place where appropriate. I find it extraordinary, Speaker, that the waste diversion percentage in industrial, commercial and institutional is around 13%. A big chunk of that waste is paper. The idea that paper in large quantities would be going to landfills boggles the mind—it totally boggles the mind. A large part of our waste is organic waste from restaurants. The idea that we wouldn't be able to recover that waste, compost it, use it for building up our soil in Ontario, use it for all kinds of other beneficial purposes, boggles the mind.

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In the end, consumers, taxpayers and municipalities should not be left to foot the bill. The provincial govern-

ment needs to empower itself to penalize those who do not meet diversion targets or standards for recycling. We need to prioritize waste diversion in this province. We should be tracking where the waste is going and setting the standards on how it's dealt with. We need to bring accountability and transparency to our waste diversion programs in Ontario and restore public confidence. Programs should be monitored and audited for their environmental and financial performance to ensure that they're being managed in an efficient and cost-effective manner, and the results of these audits should be made publicly available. How do you hold a government to account if you don't know what it's doing? People need to be able to find out through access to publications exactly how functional or dysfunctional our waste diversion programs are. That information has to be made public.

Speaker, we need to look at the creation of jobs through reuse, for example, by moving towards refillable wine bottles. What has been done in the beer sector in terms of refillable bottles has been extraordinary. It shouldn't be extraordinary; it should be everyday. Frankly, we drink a fair amount of wine in Ontario. I think the province is very happy to drink a fair amount of wine, and I think it would be just as happy to drink that wine from refillable bottles.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Cheers.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Virtue, and cheers, at the same time. Exactly.

We've talked about a variety of issues, but I also want to talk for a moment about the direction that the government is taking on the use of garbage burning, or—what's the euphemism?—energy from waste. The decision by this Liberal government to pay garbage-burning operations for the energy they produce is absolutely staggering to me. I read the minister's comments from his leadoff speech at second reading on the link between climate change and waste. The minister made a strong argument for waste reduction and recycling to substantially cut our greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, he made a case that it was imperative to take action to cut those greenhouse gas emissions. Yet at the same time, a few rows over, we have the Minister of Energy offering cash payments to garbage incinerators for generating electricity from the heat created by their mass burning of garbage.

I have to tell you, Speaker, when a company is making money burning garbage and selling the electricity, you can be sure that their lobbyists will be swarming all over this building if we take substantial action to cut off their fuel supply. But in fact, if we move towards a zero-waste society, if we move to a virtually zero-waste society, the material for garbage burning will drop dramatically.

Most of what's recyclable is also what's burnable. Why would we be putting up these garbage burners—close to agricultural operations, I might add, where we get to eat or drink the residue from those garbage burners. Why would we do that?

Either this government wants to cut greenhouse gas emissions and will divert the majority of waste from the

current waste stream, which will mean very little fuel for garbage burners, or we'll continue to generate lots of waste and, with the burning of the waste, even more greenhouse gas emissions. You can't have it both ways. I look forward as my speech goes on to exploring this issue a little more thoroughly.

As my colleague Jonah Schein has said, burning waste reduces the incentive to reduce or divert waste in the first place. We shouldn't be squandering resources by burning them for energy. He summarized his points about what needs to be put in place in order to divert waste successfully: We need to ensure producers are accountable for the full life cycle of the waste they create. We need to incentivize consumers and producers alike to do the right thing for our environment. We need to enforce regulations that mandate waste recovery and protection of our environment, and issue fines for non-compliance. And we need to create the market conditions in Ontario for environmentally conscious, smart and innovative industries to take root and prosper.

I think my colleague did a pretty good job of setting out the key principles that need to be respected when you're putting together a bill that will deal with this very substantial problem.

So what's in this bill?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Finally, we get to the meat of the matter.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ah, you have been waiting so long, but you were patient.

Bill 151 enacts the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act and the Waste Diversion Transition Act. Together, these statutes replace the current Waste Diversion Act, 2002, the WDA.

A key feature of the Waste Diversion Act is the use of industry funding organizations—IFOs—and industry stewardship plans. Bill 151 enables the transition to a regime of greater producer responsibility for waste.

Frankly, Speaker, that's a good thing. I have worries about timelines and regulations; I think those are substantive matters. But putting in place the machinery for transition? That's a good thing.

The new legislative framework for waste management will be similar to that of land use planning under the Planning Act, in that the government will define provincial interest for the system of resource recovery and waste reduction and will issue policy statements with the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the cabinet.

Persons and entities with powers or responsibilities under this act or another act that has a relationship to the matter will be required to have regard to the provincial interest. Persons and entities with powers or responsibilities under this act or other listed acts will be required to act in a manner that is consistent with the policy statements.

Now, I understand philosophically why the government would do this, but I think there are substantial questions that are raised here, because I look at planning in Ontario and the way that planning is carried out and

the way that planning gets bent out of shape. Under the current planning regime, my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo could speak to Kitchener–Waterloo’s efforts to put in place zoning to restrain sprawl and to actually have a compact, environmentally progressive city, and yet they got beaten down totally at the Ontario Municipal Board.

So I have to ask, Speaker, will this new act, will this setting of provincial goals, with a requirement for other bodies to follow along, actually give the protection that the environment needs? Will it be extraordinarily loose? Will we be in a situation where individual councils will “have regard for” the law—and that’s a legal term—but, beyond lip service, not actually implement it?

I talk to colleagues of mine who serve on rural councils, who are engaged in huge battles over interpretations of provincial statements on planning. That has very substantial implications for development of habitation or subdivisions along roads. So it’s spread out. A lot more transportation services are required. It’s more expensive for rural municipalities to service those communities strung out along roads. Speaker, if this is as loose as the Planning Act, then I think we may have a substantial problem here.

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I note that “every five years, the minister shall prepare” and publish a progress report describing actions that have been taken toward the strategy’s goals and the description of the progress made toward these goals, based on the performance measures outlined in the strategy. Now, I have to say, maybe I didn’t read the bill as thoroughly as I should have, and maybe I will find this as I go through it a second or third time, but it doesn’t seem to require the minister to table these reports in the Legislature. If my reading wasn’t faulty, then the minister needs to clarify or correct that. Those reports have to be available, not only to us, but to the people of Ontario generally.

Waste Diversion Ontario, which was established in the Waste Diversion Act, continues as the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority, which I will refer to as the RPRA in my further comments, because that’s an awfully long title. This delegated authority is not a crown agent. So, one has to ask how much power is being delegated to this authority, and how will they be held to account? My colleague from Huron–Bruce, I think, touched on this in her remarks. My colleague Jonah Schein had this to say about similar structures and issues in the predecessor bill, Bill 91: “Is it the right approach for the Ministry of the Environment to transfer enforcement powers to a new authority that ensures compliance of producers and recyclers, or is this enforcement better done by the ministry itself?”

Groups like the Canadian Environmental Law Association have raised concern that transferring enforcement to the authority will reduce the independence and fairness of prosecutions under the act. The Canadian Environmental Law Association is a pretty serious group. They analyze these matters; they look at precedent in Ontario. When they express concerns, I think that people should

listen to them. You may ultimately disagree with them, but they’re not a group to be dismissed; they’re a group to be taken account of.

Prosecutors in the Ministry of the Environment are accountable to the Attorney General to ensure that there is no political interference in prosecutions conducted by the crown. The Attorney General, in turn, is accountable to the Legislature. Delegating enforcement to this new agency could undermine this accountability structure and remove important procedural requirements such as disclosure.

Look at the history of the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, a group that we’ve had occasion to discuss at length in this Legislature, particularly after the propane explosion at Sunrise Propane in North York. We’ve discussed them and looked at the difficulties, the problems these delegated authorities have around the risk and deficiencies of outsourcing inspection and enforcement to an agency. Therefore, the Canadian Environmental Law Association and others believe that enforcement of law is a core government function that should not be transferred to a delegated administrative authority.

A further question is whether the Waste Reduction Authority, as it was in Bill 91, or the RPRA in this incarnation, will have the resources to monitor and audit compliance of waste diversion practices and have an adequate number of inspectors with sufficient authority to conduct inspections. As I look through the act, the enforcement branch has a fair amount of authority to enter non-residential buildings to seize records; they can call on the police to go with them to seize records. So they seem to have some of the fairly obvious elements in terms of ability to go in and enforce the law. I think the questions may well be: Will there be enough inspectors; will they have a mandate to actually protect Ontario’s environment; and will this designated non-crown-corporation body have the authority and momentum and force to do what is needed?

Certainly, we’ve seen in other jurisdiction and other areas, such as unlicensed home daycare, where lack of enforcement really does provide us with very substantial problems. The Waste Reduction Authority needs real auditing powers and capacities, and for that it needs to be adequately resourced.

Now, a point that my colleague raised with the Waste Reduction Authority needs to be raised here as well. The RPRA—this resource productivity authority—can be audited by our Auditor General, but it isn’t subject to review by parliamentary committee, it isn’t subject to the Environmental Bill of Rights, it isn’t subject to the protections that the Ombudsman can provide, and I think that’s a problem. The authority is open to assessment by the Auditor General, as I noted, but we know that the auditor has limited resources to monitor every agency.

We also know that in the case of Hydro One the Ombudsman took a huge initiative that was of great consequence for the people of Ontario when they were dealing with the complete disaster around billing and

misbilling that happened across this province. We now know how a lack of accountability of government agencies or quasi government agencies—Ornge, eHealth, the Ontario Power Authority—has cost Ontarians billions of dollars under the current Liberal regime. It's a mistake we shouldn't be repeating in this legislation. It's an item that we're going to be looking at very closely as we go further with this bill.

Each year, the RPRA shall submit and publish a business plan describing its activities and objectives for the current and next two years. It shall also submit and publish an annual report. Now, the cabinet—the Lieutenant Governor in Council—may prohibit the sale of a prescribed material if responsible collectors under the act have failed to collect it or if responsible persons under the act have habitually failed to fulfill any responsibilities with respect to the prescribed material.

That is a useful power. If there is a producer who does not in fact take the responsibilities seriously for—what can one say?—end-of-life processing or management of a particular product or material, then, yes, this province needs the authority to step in. Irresponsible actors, irresponsible players, need to be called to account. The government doesn't have the power to say, "Wait a minute. Your products are highly problematic. They need to be kept out of the market."

I'll give you an example. I had a meeting with police in my riding recently. To my great surprise, they were after counterfeiters. I thought immediately, when they said counterfeiters, that they were talking about money, but, no, they were talking about counterfeit pizza ovens. There are pizza ovens that have been manufactured completely outside normal standards. Someone had been able to get CSA stickers to put on them, and so there were pizza ovens along the Danforth in Toronto that were counterfeit. They were not safe, not fit for use.

I have to say, Speaker, that our existing laws prohibiting unsafe equipment in restaurants and in other places are good laws. I was happy that the police were going after these counterfeiters. I think it makes sense for us to have an expansion of legal authority so we can deal with products where the manufacturers abrogate, ignore or completely pass on their responsibility to deal with the full life cycle of a product.

We've heard a few stakeholder reactions and, interestingly, they reflect some of the concerns that I have expressed and that the official opposition has expressed. The Ontario Waste Management Association put out a backgrounder from December which expressed broad support for Bill 151. Like us, they see individual producer responsibility as a good thing. They see some broader government powers as a good thing. But they caution about potential issues that could emerge as details are ironed out. Again, that's the point I raise, Speaker: that so much of this will be left to regulation that will not come back to us for consideration.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has long advocated for extended producer responsibility for waste diversion programs. No surprise, because their members

get stuck with the tab. If there is an item that's out there that is made in such a way that it cannot be recycled, they are the ones that get stuck with the cost of finding a landfill somewhere and putting it in that landfill. So they have an interest in the bill, that it will actually do what is promised. They are concerned about rising costs for municipalities imposed on them by the industry-funded organizations that find ways to avoid paying their traditional 50% share of costs for blue box materials. Obviously, AMO would welcome legislation that would shift these responsibilities and costs to producers, but it notes that the actual effect of this act will depend on regulations—exactly the point I made and that the Ontario Waste Management Association made—and that transition is estimated to take three to five years; in other words, after this coming election cycle.

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It may just be a coincidence, Speaker. Who knows? I don't know. Three to five years—who knew that it was going to be like that? Just totally arbitrary, random.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture: In a statement, the OFA said, "OFA applauds the waste-free initiative proposed in Bill 151"—enjoy that, Liberals, while I repeat that—noting that one objective of the act is "to reduce waste, and reduce the province's dependence on landfills that are typically located in rural areas."

Yes, they are now located in rural areas. I have to say that my riding has a huge landfill, the Don Valley. If you see Riverdale Park, it's a beautiful park for tobogganing. It's fabulous. It is a giant landfill. You will see, along Broadview Avenue, these 10-foot-tall pipes, about 30 of them. They're the methane catch-and-release mechanism. If you go in to the floor of the Don Valley, if you drive along the Don Valley south of Bloor, you'll notice all the greenery out there. That sits on about 10 feet of cinders, of ash that came from the incinerator at Dundas and the Don Valley, that operated in the last century. I don't know how late it operated—maybe into the 1920s and 1930s. So there's a lot of landfill that is now capped off in urban areas. The new ones are in rural areas.

The OFA, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, also noted that much will depend on subsequent regulations. I think we've all noticed that a huge amount of power is being given to the government, giving them the power to write regulations that we will never get a chance to review. They wrote, "We don't want to be surprised by any unintended consequences impacting Ontario farm businesses. Ontario farmers already participate in recycling programs that involve the recycling of pesticide and fertilizer containers; feed, seed and pesticide bags; plastic bale wrap, and many other items used on the farm. Expansion of those programs will be an important development under the proposed act."

They're right. They don't want to get blindsided. They don't want to see regulations come along that are hugely problematic. Like us, they would like to see more in this bill, more concrete detail, so we know exactly what this framework, this enabling legislation, is going to be used for.

The Workers Health and Safety Centre was hopeful that Bill 151 would result in fewer hazardous materials in the waste stream, noting that while the Toxics Reduction Act requires monitoring and reduction plans, the implementation of these plans is not mandatory. They're hopeful that in the process of putting this bill together, action will be taken to further reduce the amount of toxics that individual workers deal with and that we deal with in the waste stream.

If we look back about waste diversion and action on waste diversion, you'll see that the Liberal government has been talking about reforming the Waste Diversion Act for over a decade. Following a mandatory five-year review of the Waste Diversion Act in 2007, the government released a discussion paper in October 2008 that proposed a goal of zero waste—I wish those words were in this act—zero waste within an extended producer responsibility framework. The report, for all of those who are out there, eager to enter it into Google, is *Toward a Zero Waste Future—Government of Ontario, 2008*.

The discussion paper was followed by a ministerial report in 2009 entitled *From Waste to Worth: The Role of Waste Diversion in the Green Economy*. The report recommended a new system based on outcomes-based individual producer responsibility—yes, that was 2009; it was only seven years ago—in which producers would be “fully responsible for meeting waste diversion requirements for waste discarded in both the residential and ... industrial, commercial and institutional sectors.”

Despite this recommendation seven years ago, nothing happened. Five years passed after that 2008 election paper without a bill. Then finally, in 2013—that's one election, one prorogation and one Premier later—the Liberal government finally tabled Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act. That bill was introduced in June 2013, and there were 16 days of second reading debate—16 days. Man, you've heard of endless summer? Well, this takes the “summer” out and just is endless. The bill never made it to vote, never made it to committee. The bill was never debated at all in 2014 and it died when the election was called in May 2014.

Eight years after the government proposed a zero-waste future, Ontario is still waiting for individual producer responsibility. And as I said earlier, with the lack of timelines in this bill, one has to ask how much longer Ontario is going to have to wait. You would think that after eight years, the government would have figured out some timelines and been able to say, “As of 2017, this is in place. As of 2018, this is in place.” Except for that pesky election coming up, I'm sure they would.

What do we have now, in place of extended producer responsibility? We have a shared responsibility system when it comes to most waste. Producers only carry some of the cost of waste created by their products and packaging. For example, the costs of Ontario's Blue Box Program are shared, and that's theoretically 50-50, between municipalities and producers.

The government's discussion paper on this matter notes some major problems with this model—mainly the

fact that the people generating waste do not bear the cost of the waste. So there are inadequate incentives to reduce, reuse or recycle.

A 2013 policy paper on extended producer responsibility observed that “under the Waste Diversion Act, “functioning recycling markets have been disrupted; consumers have been burdened by eco fees in some cases unfairly; recycling targets have not been met; program efficiencies questioned....

“Concerns with programs under the WDA are well documented. This includes, numerous reports by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario and the Auditor General, and within government reports.”

We need to move to a system of extended producer responsibility so that the responsibility for cost is borne solely by the producers.

Speaker, in my last few minutes I again want to say that the problem with leaving most of what's concrete to regulations means that the debate on what's in those regulations won't be in the public realm. Those who have the most sophisticated, most expensive lobbyists, the most well-connected lobbyists, will be the ones who will be working the committee rooms—committee rooms that most of us in this chamber won't ever attend—going to those committee rooms and having those meetings where the regulations are hammered out and will be presented to the people of Ontario as a fait accompli. That is not very democratic. That is not what we need in terms of protecting the public good. That is very problematic. That's something that I think the government needs to address in this bill.

As well, the government should be taking the opportunity to look again at this rewarding the burning of garbage in Ontario. The burning of garbage and the paying of those garbage burners for the electricity they produce is opposed by the Toronto Environmental Alliance, the Canadian Environmental Law Association, the Citizens Environment Alliance of Southwestern Ontario, the David Suzuki Foundation, Durham Environment Watch, Environmental Defence Canada and Environment Hamilton. The environmental coalition notes that 85% to 90% of municipal solid waste is recyclable or compostable. Burning all that material defeats the very idea of having a waste management act that reduces greenhouse gas emissions. It makes sure that there is huge pressure to continue producing that fuel so that more carbon dioxide can go into the atmosphere.

Speaker, I'm looking forward to further debate on this bill. I expect we will be going to committee. I look forward to hearing from the stakeholders. I, along with members of my party, will be providing a number of amendments that we hope will be made to make this bill effective.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It's my privilege and responsibility, of course, to rise in support of Bill 151, the Waste-Free Ontario Act, 2015. As you'll know, Speaker, many

bills we do—we use the phrase that we do it for our children. But I'd like to just share with the House that I actually have two of my children present, both willing and voluntary, not mandatory: Shamsa Qadri and Shafiq Jr. We welcome them. They are here specifically to see that we do just that: leave a better Ontario to the children.

There are many aspects to this bill; for example, increasing waste diversion, keeping valuable resources out of landfills and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from our waste stream. As our Minister of Climate Change has spoken very forcefully and committedly about, this is perhaps the single leading issue of our time.

I must say, Speaker, as you will know, that the government of Ontario and the Premier travel globally—for example, recently to Beijing, and also to India—and you can see the effects of, let's call it, improper, not ideal and not optimal waste management and greenhouse gas reduction. It's rampant on the streets, in the landfills, in the cities and so on. This is something that we in Ontario are taking very seriously.

As you know, there are many, many components to this bill. For example, over eight million tonnes of waste are sent to landfills every year, and there are approximately a billion dollars' worth of recoverable materials in those very landfills. Between the job creation, the environmental sense and our stewardship of the environment going forward, I think that together, all told, that is a worthy goal, not only for us as stewards of the environment but, literally and figuratively, for our children.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to add some comments to the debate this afternoon in response to the third party's environment critic. Surprisingly, he and I have things in common, and I appreciate his comments sincerely. I enjoy working with him, actually, because he's very thoughtful.

One of the thoughtful comments that he shared this afternoon was around the policy statements that could be developed. We worry about these policy statements as well, just like the environment critic for the third party does. With the way we have reviewed it, ministry directors can issue directives to businesses and require them to write reports detailing how they will meet the provisions laid out in policy statements. At the same time, the authority can issue directives to businesses to ensure that they are in compliance with reporting and recycling standards. If a business disagrees with a directive from the authority, it can appeal to the Environmental Review Tribunal. If a business disagrees with a ministry directive, they have no way to appeal it. This is a problem that we feel needs to be addressed. We worry, because how is this fair?

When we think about this government's own Open for Business initiative, I would suggest to you that the whole point of being open for business is to reduce regulatory burden. So we issue a caution here: We sincerely say, let's not create wasteful bureaucracy. Let's not increase red tape and complicate and get in the way of industry

moving forward to having a better waste diversion rate than we do right now in Ontario.

We all have to work together to make sure we get this right in committee, so that there is something feasible and tangible we can all wholesomely support in third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I just want to congratulate the member from Toronto–Danforth on his contributions to this very important bill. As we've heard, this bill has been a long time coming.

The member talked about how long these timelines might take and if they will get accomplished. We've had some experience with that. It took 13 years for this government to come out with a provincial nominee program. It also took 10 years to come up with the Ontario anti-racism secretariat. I hope that the action on this file, on Bill 151, will be a little more speedy.

As the member from Danforth said, this government's record on waste diversion is at a standstill, and has been at a standstill for quite some time. We need action on this file. This environment, with regard to waste diversion, is in bad shape, so we're glad that this government presented this bill to the House, but we also have questions and concerns about the fact that there really are no measurable goals in this bill. It's basically a vision for a strategy. It's kind of left up to regulation.

We don't get that feedback on regulation. When you do that, what happens is those regulations are done by lobbyists and by special interest groups who have that leverage or that kind of advantage. Therefore, that bill that we're agreeing to today and which we all believe, in principle, is a good thing may not be the bill that the people actually thought was going to come out of this legislation, and be effective enough to have a waste-free Ontario.

I hope this debate on this waste-free Ontario bill isn't a waste. I hope it's going to be effective and that this government will come through and show us real leadership on this topic.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Let's thank the minister for climate change for this legislation.

I will be sharing my time with the member from Newmarket–Aurora, and chair of cabinet, I think—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I just wish to inform the member we're on questions and comments, the two-minute hits, if you wish.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Oh, sorry. Okay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. We look forward to your speech. That concludes our—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There have been four questions and comments, even though the fourth one was very brief, which means we now allow the member for Toronto–Danforth to respond.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the members from Etobicoke North, Huron–Bruce, London–Fanshawe,

Durham—no matter how briefly—and the member from Mississauga—Brampton South, who did try. My guess is that she actually did hear parts of what I had to say.

The member from Etobicoke North was correct: Climate change is the single leading issue facing our society today. I have to say it's intertwined with some others but, really, in terms of our future, it's critical. This bill should be contributing to a substantial part of the solution, and it's my hope that we can bring about amendments that will be useful.

It is my worry—it has been said by the member from Huron—Bruce and by my colleague from London—Fanshawe—that absent the concrete elements in the regulations, we have very substantial misgivings about what actually will be put on the ground at the end of the day.

I understand why a government would do this, but I also have to say it's hugely problematic when you're asking others to vote for a bill when a lot of what's concretely going to be done is not visible at this point.

My colleague from London—Fanshawe talked about things taking a long time to come to fruition. She's quite correct. We've waited for an anti-racism secretariat, now called the Anti-Racism Directorate, for about a decade. We can't wait another decade, again, for action on waste diversion. Too much is at stake, too many problems await us and too many surprises are waiting out there for us. We need to get on with this, but we need to have more concrete from the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Durham.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Speaker. My apologies; my faux pas.

Let's thank the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change for this legislation. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the members who spoke so eloquently toward this bill before me.

1750

Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member from Newmarket—Aurora, as well as the Chair of Cabinet.

As we all know, the environment and our influences are not getting along very well. As humans, we create a lot of waste. Everything we do, especially in the global north, involves the creation of waste, whether through production of the things we use or what is left of it when we're done.

Recently, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and the World Economic Forum released a report that claimed there will be 750 million tonnes of plastic in our oceans by 2050. Their metaphor was that this means there will be more plastic than fish in our seas in fewer than 50 years. In Ontario today, it's estimated that we each create five pounds of waste every single day.

Clearly, we need to take action, and that is what our government is doing with this bill. We talk about population growth, economic growth, development and expansion, but it is wholly characteristic of 21st century thought that we must consider how we will make that growth sustainable. Adjusting to the new reality is a long process.

Ontarians generate about 20 million tonnes of waste per year, of which we divert from landfill only about one million tonnes. Ninety-seven per cent of households have access to a blue box recycling program, and maybe sometimes we shame our neighbours who don't make use of it as we should do, Mr. Speaker. Green bin programs are also becoming available to Ontarians. Almost half of the one million tonnes of organic waste collected in 2014 came from green bins, which in total makes up about a third of our total waste.

In Clarington, the regions of Durham and York have built an energy-from-waste facility which is owned by the region and operated by industry. It can currently combust about 140,000 tonnes of waste per year and can power about 10,000 homes. This is a similar model to the northern European countries with stringent emission regulation where usable land is a precious commodity. It makes us ask ourselves what our priorities are: larger and less sustainable landfills, or smart alternatives that reduce our impact?

So 47% of residential waste is diverted from disposal, but in the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors, only about 13% is diverted. This doesn't seem entirely fair. Yes, industry fees cover about 50% of what it costs municipalities to administer the Blue Box Program, but will that continue to be enough? Not when waste disposal remains cheaper than diversion, and not when blue box programs cost about double what it costs to put waste in a landfill. Ontario's families are sorting their waste and making efforts to consume less. Industry should follow suit.

We are going to hold producers fully responsible for recovery and reduction of waste by eliminating fees that end up being passed from industry to consumers, because we believe that the cost of resource recovery and recycling should be treated like any other cost of doing business in Ontario.

This act will address the nearly \$1 billion worth of recoverable materials that end up in landfills across Canada. We will provide numerous tools to ensure those resources are recovered and not lost. We will harness the economic value of these materials, including the job creation and growth involved in increased diversion, and propel investment from industry in waste management and recycling.

Those who produce the waste should be accountable, like every other Ontarian, for diverting that waste from landfills so that we can increase our diversion rate, which has hovered around 25% for far too long, and to give real teeth to notions of sustainable growth. I am happy to support this act, and I look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm delighted to carry on the debate on behalf of the government, and to carry on with remarks that the member from Durham started. I think that Ontario is showing real leadership in taking action to support the circular economy, a system where nothing is wasted and valuable materials destined for landfill are

put back into the economy without negative effects on people and the environment.

There's been some discussion by members opposite and members on this side of the House about landfill sites, or, as I would have called them in my youth, dumps. One of the largest in Ontario was the Keele Valley dump just to the south of the small town of King City, which I grew up in, just on the outskirts of Maple. It was so massive that in my youth, when we stood on the edge, it seemed like if you fell in, you would never be found. That dump was filled and built higher and higher and higher, and became a ski hill eventually. Now it's dotted with methane recovery pipes; the methane is pumped to a central processing area where it is burned and fires turbines that make electricity for the local community.

Even as a young kid, standing in the edge of that massive dump, I was awestruck at all the garbage and all the waste that was going in there, and wondered about all of the metal that would never be recovered, for example, because it was buried under tons and tons of other garbage and dirt. I'm glad to see that things have progressed over the years, but perhaps they have not progressed far enough, and I believe that's really at the root of what this bill is all about.

A new approach is needed, and this government understands that: one that will increase waste diversion, one that will keep valuable resources out of landfills and one that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions from our waste stream.

Other speakers have mentioned this, but I will again: Over eight million tonnes of waste are sent to the landfill each year in Ontario. That represents approximately \$1 billion worth of recoverable material lost each year in landfills across Canada. We're missing out on a huge

opportunity to generate revenue and create jobs. Recovering just 60% of waste materials could create 13,000 jobs and contribute \$1.5 billion in gross domestic product in Ontario. This is not only the right thing to do; it is a huge economic opportunity.

Ontarians, as was mentioned earlier, generate nearly 12 million tonnes of waste each year. On average, each Ontarian generates 2.3 kilograms of waste material per day. Ontario's overall waste diversion rate has remained at around 25% for the past decade. Ontario's four waste diversion programs under the Waste Diversion Act of 2002 divert over one million tonnes each year. That's good, but not good enough. I think we all can agree on that. About 47% of Ontario's residential waste is diverted from disposal. However, the diversion rate in the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors continues to be low, at about 13%.

I spoke earlier about the economic benefits of the circular economy. The waste management sector, we're told, contributes a little over \$2 billion to Ontario's GDP. This is nearly as large as the contribution to GDP from paper manufacturing in Ontario.

We'll wrap it up quickly, Mr. Speaker. Really, I look forward to the support of the House for this bill. When we get to committee, we can work some of the details out and move Ontario along.

Thank you for your indulgence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

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Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
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Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
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Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Norm Miller
Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
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**Elimination of Ground Current Pollution Act, 2016,
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Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 41st Parliament

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Première session, 41^e législature

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 22 February 2016

Lundi 22 février 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller



Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 22 February 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 22 février 2016

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBER FOR WHITBY-OSHAWA

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk from the Chief Electoral Officer and laid upon the table a certificate of the by-election in the electoral district of Whitby-Oshawa.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): This is a letter addressed to Deborah Deller, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and it reads as follows:

“A writ of election dated the 13th day of January, 2016, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to William Paul Jones, returning officer for the electoral district of Whitby-Oshawa, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Whitby-Oshawa in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Christine Elliott who, since her election as representative of the said electoral district of Whitby-Oshawa, has resigned her seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Whitby-Oshawa on the 11th day of February, 2016, Lorne Coe has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election dated the 13th day of February, 2016, which is now lodged of record in my office.”

It is signed “Greg Essensa, Chief Electoral Officer” and dated “Toronto, February 22, 2016.”

Mr. Coe was escorted into the House by Mr. Brown and Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Mr. Lorne Coe, member-elect for the electoral district of Whitby-Oshawa, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and is now ready to take his seat in the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let the honourable member take his seat.

Applause.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: This morning I would like to welcome to the Legislature members of Fix Our Schools and their supporting trustees, individuals and other organizations. We have Krista Wylie, Carolyn Ferns, Spencer Higdon-McGreal, Danielle Chandler, Julian

Heller, Victoria Bitto, Abigail Doris, Geoffrey Feldman, Dennis Hastings, Jean-Francois L'Heureux, Claude-Reno D'Aigle, Jennifer Arp, Pamela Gough, Alexander Brown, Bill Mboutsiadis—I apologize if I said that wrong—Lauren Maiolo, Victoria Martins, Fabiana Stelzer and Ariadra Garcia.

Mr. Mike Colle: Mr. Speaker, As you know, today the Public Affairs Association of Canada is inviting all MPPs to come to room 228 from 5:30 to 7:30. With us today from the Public Affairs Association of Canada we have four very distinguished people: first of all, president John Capobianco, treasurer Stephen Andrews, marketing chair Cristina Onose and illustrious membership chair Harvey Cooper.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to welcome Jeff Koller, Matt Wayland and all of the Progressive Certified Trades Coalition, who represent about 100,000 construction workers. They're here today for their lobby day. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Avec nous aujourd'hui sont des membres du conseil d'administration de l'ACFO du grand Sudbury: Denis Constantineau, le président; Marie-Eve Pépin, la vice-présidente; et Vincent Lacroix. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce in the members' gallery my wife and my son and daughter, as well as my campaign managers, Rob Morton and Kathy Beattie.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm very pleased this morning to welcome the family of Owen Davies, who is page captain for today. His proud mother, Cheryl Davies; his dad, Rob Davies; his brothers, Bryn and Rhys Davies; and his grandmother, Borden Craddock, have all joined us in the gallery today.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to introduce Borden Craddock from the great riding of York South-Weston. She is the grandmother of page Owen Davies, who is page captain today. I would also like to welcome her family from London. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm very pleased to welcome the mayor and deputy mayor of the town of Bracebridge, who are down from ROMA/OGRA, and that's Graydon Smith, mayor, and Rick Maloney, deputy mayor, who are in the members' west gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

1040

Also, I would like to welcome members of the Progressive Certified Trades Coalition who are at Queen's Park meeting with MPPs, and Craig Hughson, who arranged a lot of it for them.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to welcome some friends from the Windsor-Essex area. Barry Heeney is

the assistant business manager of IBEW Local 773, and Karl Lovett is the business manager and financial secretary for Local 773. I'd like to welcome them here today to Queen's Park.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'd like to welcome the grade 5 class from Northern Lights Public School in Aurora to Queen's Park this morning. Welcome.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to welcome the progressive certified trade unions of Ontario visiting the House today. Please join me in welcoming them.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm very pleased to welcome my dear friend from IBEW, Mr. Lorne Newick. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I heard "IBEW," so I looked up into the gallery and I saw the local IBEW representative from Thunder Bay, Mr. Glen Drewes. I'd like to welcome Glen to the Legislature.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to introduce a former colleague and a member of the Legislature, MPP Steven Gilchrist.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for doing that as an introduction to my introduction. I'd like to appreciate that.

In the members' gallery is Mr. Steve Gilchrist, member for Scarborough East in the 36th and 37th Parliaments. Welcome, Steve. We're glad you're back with us.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. This year's budget is only days away, and the Ontario PC caucus is looking for a few assurances. Liberal scandals, waste and mismanagement have led to hydro bills that have skyrocketed in our province. Energy is now unaffordable, and many vulnerable seniors and families simply can't afford their hydro bills. Therefore, this budget must include a credible plan to make energy affordable in Ontario, and any credible plan must include halting the fire sale of Hydro One.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier appreciate that any budget without a plan for affordable energy will be viewed as a failure to all those seniors, families and businesses across Ontario struggling with the Liberal hydro mess?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Once again, let me welcome Lorne Coe to the Legislature. We look forward to working with him. Welcome, Lorne.

Mr. Speaker, in 2003, we were elected on a platform to deliver clean, modern, reliable electricity in this province, because there wasn't clean, affordable, reliable electricity in this province. There were huge investments needed to invest. There was an artificial cap that had been put on the price of electricity that created huge problems down the road.

I would say to the Leader of the Opposition that I hope he acknowledges that the investments that have been

made in our electricity system mean that it is clean, mean that it's reliable and mean that thousands of kilometres of line have been upgraded—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. It's coming from all sides.

Answer.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We did make a decision to take the whole province off coal. There's a cost associated with that, but we have that clean, reliable power that we knew we needed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: Let me say that "scandal, waste and mismanagement" is not code for "investments." This government must be looking at ways to make electricity and hydro bills more affordable.

Just look at the story that I read recently about Blenheim resident Cathy Van Breda. I recently read her story in the Chatham Daily News. She is a 74-year-old widow. Her last hydro bill was \$813. She said that was \$500 more than what she usually pays.

Mr. Speaker, does this government understand that their scandals, mismanagement and waste mean higher hydro bills for residents like Ms. Van Breda? Will the Premier apologize to Ms. Van Breda? Will she apologize for this atrocious bill, because of her government's incompetence on hydro?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would hope that the member for that citizen of Ontario would make it clear to her what the programs are that would help her with her electricity bill, because we recognize that investing in our—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I have said quite clearly that there are costs associated with investing in a system that had been neglected and degraded by a previous government. Those costs have meant that we have now got a system that is reliable and clean. We are ahead of the curve in terms of a—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will move right to members directly. I will move to warnings. The member from Simcoe–Grey will come to order and the member from Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would say to the Leader of the Opposition, if he is suggesting that we should go back to coal or subsidize and create more debt, we're not going to do that. That artificial cap that was put on by the previous government, the burning of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell just chirped one too many. I'm now moving to warnings.

You have 10 seconds.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are not going back to burning coal. If that's what the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting, we're not going there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The voters in Whitby—Oshawa didn't buy that smear either. And do you know what, Mr. Speaker? It was Premier Ernie Eves who announced the phase-out of coal, so don't try any of these diversion tactics.

The reality is that this is because of your—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Just to make sure that the members understand: At any given time, you will get a warning. When it gets too loud by everybody, I'll stop.

Finish, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, we've obviously touched a nerve. The Liberal government doesn't want to talk. This is their fault. They must own up to it.

The Auditor General said very clearly that it is because of your mismanagement, so let's go back to what this is about. This is about seniors across the province who can't afford their bills because of your political interference in the energy sector.

Ms. Van Breda has done everything possible to lower her bill. She doesn't turn the TV on until the late afternoon, she keeps no lights on during the day, she cleaned up her attic to put insulation in, and it's still \$800. Will you apologize to the seniors in this province? This is because of you. This is because of your—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's be clear: The Leader of the Opposition is saying that we should not have invested in those transmission lines around the province, we should not have upgraded the system, we should not have continued to shut down the coal-fired plants, and we should not have a clean, renewable electricity system. The Leader of the Opposition is suggesting either that we return to burning coal or that we do as a previous Conservative government did and put an artificial cap on electricity prices, which will actually increase the cost to the people of Ontario.

I would say to the Leader of the Opposition that we have a plan. He knows full well that the broadening of the ownership of Hydro One, which will allow us to invest in infrastructure, has nothing to do with electricity prices—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If the last episode was a test, I will pass the test, and warnings will be distributed.

New question.

1050

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Premier. For years, it has been clear to us on this side of the House how damaging your government's reckless and dangerous energy policies truly are. The phone calls to my office and my colleagues' offices just haven't stopped. We hear from constituents every day who are desperate for help because they can't afford their hydro bills. Many people in Ontario don't know how they're going to pay this month's bill.

Speaker, why does this government stubbornly refuse to do anything to make energy more affordable in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I hope that when those people call his office the member opposite is very clear with them that we do understand that there are challenges; we do understand that there was a cost associated with shutting down the coal-fired plants and there was a cost associated with making a degraded electricity system a reliable electricity system. That's why we have removed the debt retirement charge. We have put in place the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, which is targeted particularly at seniors to allow them to reduce their electricity costs. We've put in place the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program. We've put in place the Northern Ontario Energy Credit. We've made it very, very clear that there are mitigating programs to deal with the cost.

The fact is, we had to have a reliable, clean energy system. That was not left by the previous government. That's what we've built in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's just a rolling shell game. Your former minister, George Smitherman, said that the Green Energy Act was going to cost 1% a year. That's where the costs have gone. The auditor says that it cost \$9.2 billion more than it should have. This government's out-of-touch response is no more than just a mere Band-Aid for the gaping hole that is skyrocketing hydro bills. It's not just families and seniors in this province who are struggling to pay them; as hydro prices rise in Ontario, our businesses become less and less competitive.

The Liberals have driven job-creating businesses right out of Ontario and into the arms of neighbouring states and provinces—job creators like the Leamington greenhouse operator who chose Delta, Ohio, over Ontario to invest \$61 million in his expanding business. If this government doesn't reverse course on damaging policies, more and more businesses will follow suit. How many more businesses have to leave Ontario before this government introduces a credible plan to make energy more affordable?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member refers to the industrial rates or the business rates. The member must know that the Ontario price is lower than probably 25 or 30 provinces and states in the US. That's the record.

I want to say that I appreciate very much—
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe—Grey is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member mentions: Going forward, what are we going to do? I appreciate that the Conservatives supported our refurbishment program, because, in the next 30 years, we're going to put into this province electricity which will cost about 7.5 to 8 cents per kilowatt hour going into the grid, and it'll be clean and emissions-free.

We did announce, a couple of days ago, \$100 million that went into conservation that will help reduce rates. There's much more that I'll say in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Don't try to dodge the question. The question is about prices today.

Since you were elected, hydro costs have increased by more than \$1,000 a year for the average family. This government has spent the last 12 years recklessly wasting billions of dollars on cancelled gas plants, expensive green energy experiments and smart meters that were anything but smart. If they hadn't done all that, hydro bills would be much more affordable. The Auditor General has said as much in her last report. Without the waste on cancelled gas plants and smart meters, this government wouldn't have to resort—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance is warned.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me; I'm not looking for any attention.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Without that waste, you wouldn't have to resort to the fire sale of Hydro One.

Will this government finally do something to address skyrocketing hydro bills for ratepayers? Will Thursday's budget, Mr. Finance Minister, include a credible plan to make energy affordable in Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I think there's a lot of exaggeration coming from the other side. If you look at the average daily price for electricity, if you take the price of electricity that's being paid in the province, the average by the residential user is \$5.26 per day. That's less than most return transit fares in the province of Ontario. Take public transit back and forth—it costs less per day than what they're paying for electricity. Their one or two computers, one or two television sets, all their lights—all of that is \$5.26 per day. It's less than a return trip on any public transit system in Ontario. It's less than a one-way GO trip. It is value that people are getting, and we're taking steps to bring it down.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I do want to begin, on behalf of Ontario's New Democrats, by welcoming the new member for Whitby—Oshawa to the Legislature.

This is to the Premier. People expect their government to work for them and to invest in their priorities, like supporting our children's schools and reducing wait times in our hospitals. But this government just doesn't seem to share those priorities. For four straight budgets, the Liberals have chosen to freeze hospital funding. That's forced hospitals to cut millions of dollars from their budgets, close beds and fire thousands of nurses who provide front-line care to patients.

People deserve to know: How much deeper does this Premier want to cut health care services that people count on in this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the leader of the third party actually knows that we have increased funding to health care year over year, every single year. Since 2003, hospital funding has risen from \$11.3 billion to \$17.3 billion, a 53% increase. Every single year more money has gone into health care. For small, rural hospitals, we've invested over \$17 million since 2003.

So just in terms of hospital funding alone, you can see the increases that we've made, because we recognize how important those hospitals are to communities, how important health care is to the people of Ontario, Mr. Speaker, and you will see, as we go forward, we will continue to increase investments in health care across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In public, the Premier promised to protect health care, but behind closed doors she's cutting the care that we all rely on. Nearly 1,200 nursing jobs have been cut since the start of 2015 alone, and hospitals say that they are now—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development is warned.

Carry on, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Hospitals say that they are now at a critical turning point. Families know exactly what that means: longer wait times when our loved ones are sick, fewer nurses to provide critical care, fewer beds in our hospitals, more overcrowding and even more worry for families and loved ones.

How can this Premier keep cutting health care when she knows that those cuts are hurting Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand that it is somehow in the political interests of the third party leader to sow this kind of fear. But the reality is that I think it would be a much more productive discussion if the leader of the third party said, "You know, we recognize that you're putting more funding into health care but here's the plan that we would like to see in place," because the fact is, we're hiring more nurses.

The leader of the third party doesn't note, as she talks about changes, that there's hiring going on at the same

time as the other changes are taking place. She doesn't acknowledge that there are more health care workers being hired to work in the community, to work in hospitals, to work in health sciences centres. The fact is, health care needs are growing. As the population ages, changes are needed in terms of delivery. We're making those changes. We're increasing funding. We will continue to do that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Final supplementary.

1100

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, what I wish is that the Premier would actually start paying attention to what's happening to health care in Ontario. People are waiting months on end for the home care that they need. Thousands of seniors are stuck on waiting lists for long-term care in this province. The Premier's freeze on hospital budgets—which she cannot deny; she has frozen hospital budgets four years running—has forced hospitals to cut nearly 1,200 nursing jobs since the start of 2015. That's just the facts. That's what this Premier needs to recognize: the facts. But the Premier is too focused on helping private investors profit off the sale of Hydro One to even notice that health care is suffering because of her Liberal cuts.

It begs the question: How can this Premier actually think that profits for private investors are more important than patient care?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I don't. I am very focused, as is our government, on helping people to deal with the challenge of their day-to-day lives. The fact is that there have been investments in community care. That's the side of the story that the leader of the third party omits as she talks about a partial story.

The reality is that demographics are changing. The reality is that delivery of health care is changing. We need more investment in home care, and we continue to make those investments. We continue to increase funding, and we continue to hire health care workers across the province, because we know that that kind of community care is what people need.

I look forward to discussing the budget after Thursday. I hope that the leader of the third party will then be able to comment on those further investments that we are making.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier is failing miserably because she's actually making day-to-day life a lot worse for people.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. Protecting our hospitals and our children's schools is a priority for the people of Ontario, but the Premier just isn't listening to parents, students and education workers. The Liberals cut \$250 million from education last year. They've shut down nearly 100

schools in four years. Now families are worried that Thursday's budget will bring even deeper cuts to Ontario schools.

Why is this Premier cutting education when she knows that it's students that will pay the price?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're not cutting education funding; in fact, we're increasing education funding. We've increased education funding year over year. In fact, we have been doing that in the face of declining enrolment. There are fewer students in the system, but there is more funding in the system. That means that there are more resources in place for boards to deliver services.

We are seeing the results. The graduation rate in Ontario I think is at 83% or 84% after high school. When we came into office, the graduation rate in this province was 68%. Students have gotten more support, they have gotten resources that they need, and that has allowed their achievement to improve.

We will continue to work with education leaders and with parents. The Parents Reaching Out Grants were announced last week. That was a grassroots initiative that came from parents—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals have already cut \$250 million from education. That's the fact. They've said that up to half a billion dollars could permanently be cut from schools by next year. Parents, trustees and community advocates who are here today know exactly what those Liberal cuts mean to our schools. They lead to bigger class sizes, a growing backlog of critical repairs to buildings, broken heaters in the middle of winter and even more school closures.

People want an answer from this Premier. Why is she cutting education when she should be protecting our children's schools?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: First of all, let me repeat what the Premier said: We are not cutting education. The grants for student needs were \$22.5 billion a couple of years ago. They are still \$22.5 billion.

Let me give you an idea of where we have been investing money. In 2014, to keep schools in a good state of repair, the ministry announced an investment of \$1.25 billion for school condition improvement over three years. Just to give you an idea, Speaker, the way that grant works is that it's actually based on the facility condition index. We look at each board and customize the grants based on what condition the schools are in that board. That's how we distribute the funding, and I'd be happy to give you some more information in the next question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's like the Premier and the Liberals don't actually know what's going on in Ontario when it comes to education. They should look at their own last budget, which, on page 230, clearly states \$250 million is coming out of education.

The Auditor General says that the Liberals have failed today to keep up with urgent school repairs. Here's what that means: When old heaters break, students are forced to wear their jackets in class just to stay warm; ceilings leak in classrooms and libraries; and today, a quarter of the schools in Toronto are in critical condition and desperately need to be fixed. Yet this Premier is too focused on selling off Hydro One to even notice what's happening in our schools.

When will this Premier start paying attention to the urgent needs of students in our classrooms and stop her Liberal cuts to education?

Hon. Liz Sandals: In addition to the school condition improvement fund I told you about, we also have the school renewal fund, which is \$325 million this year. In fact, when you add up all the grants that have to do with school renewal and school retrofit, we actually spent \$825 million on just that one area last year alone.

We've also said to the school boards that, number one, we have a \$750-million school consolidation fund, and if you consolidate those schools with empty spaces, we'll help you. We'll help you do the renovation. We'll help you do the repair. We'll help you with the addition that you need. We've also directed the boards that if they sell a school, they must invest the money in repairing the schools they kept—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. A gentle reminder: I stand, you sit.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Premier. More than 80% of Ontarians oppose the sale of Hydro One. Two weeks ago, the voters of Whitby–Oshawa spoke loud and clear, sending this government a resounding message: They don't want the sell-off to continue. They don't want another skyrocketing hydro bill to pay for big raises at Hydro One.

Speaker, will the Premier listen to the people of Whitby–Oshawa and have her finance minister announce in the budget on Thursday that they won't be selling off any more Hydro One shares, or will she continue to insist that she knows more than the people of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I look forward to working with the new member from Whitby–Oshawa.

Mr. Speaker, I know from having listened to people in Whitby–Oshawa that a huge concern of the people in that riding is about transportation and transportation infrastructure—transit infrastructure that needs investment. It's a community that wants that connectivity, whether it's local infrastructure, whether it's the road, whether it's Highway 407, or whether it is transit and increased GO service.

The reality is that if we are going to make the investments that we know are necessary, not just in Whitby–Oshawa but across the province, we have to have the resources to do that. That's what the broadening of the ownership of Hydro One is about: investing in that infrastructure that's going to allow our economy to thrive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's clear from documents that were put before this House before Christmas that the money from Hydro One isn't going to infrastructure. If the Premier was actually listening in Whitby–Oshawa, why would she waste Justin Trudeau's time in dragging him into an election that they were going to get resoundingly defeated in?

Speaker, one small business in my riding recently received a bill for \$27,000 for a vacant LCBO building. When they challenged the bill, Hydro One had to admit that it had no idea that the LCBO had moved out, and they just continued to bill as if there was still an LCBO inside. Hydro One ended up settling—instead of \$27,000—for \$3,600, after they actually looked at the meter reading.

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People have lost faith in Hydro One. They've lost faith in this Premier. They've lost faith in this government. Will the Premier stop the further sell-off of Hydro One in this Thursday's budget?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

The Premier passed it to the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, I want to remind people that the province still owns 84% of Hydro One today. I also want to remind the members opposite that, of the proceeds from a partial sale of Hydro One shares, \$5 billion is going to reduce provincial debt and \$4 billion is going into infrastructure. Those are investments—or pay-down of debt—that are not coming from taxes or cutting programs. It is very, very smart fiscal management. Besides which, it is a better-managed company today, and it will become better as we go down the road. They are making decisions now in this short time period that are adding value to shareholders. And I must repeat one more time that Hydro One does not control rates. They're controlled by the Ontario Energy Board. So a better operating company—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Minister of Education. Schools in this province are falling apart. Over the past five years alone, this government has underfunded school repairs by \$5.8 billion. Add that to the previous repair backlog and we now have a shortfall of \$15 billion—that's billions, Speaker.

Kids are being forced to wear winter coats inside because classrooms are 12 degrees. Roofs are collapsing and children are being injured by broken infrastructure. While this government starves school boards of the resources they need to address these issues, students and families are being left behind.

My question is simple. With a budget on the horizon, Ontario families want to know: Will this government

stop cuts to the classroom and commit to fixing the disrepair in our schools?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to report that, in fact, we have continued to increase education funding. If you look at the amount of funding that was received in 2003 and compare it to today, it's up \$8.1 billion. That's 56%, at a time when the number of students has decreased.

Interjection: I think she said "billion."

Hon. Liz Sandals: Billion with a "b."

The amount per pupil has gone up. The absolute amount has gone up. The amount of funding for school renewal has gone up. The amount for school renovations has gone up. The amount of money for school repairs has gone up. Everything is going up.

While there do continue to be schools that are not in great shape, we have actually fixed the funding model—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: That just shows how out of touch the minister is, because the needs of the students have increased, the cost of electricity has increased and the cost of transportation has increased. Therefore, the budgets are not sufficient.

Again, to the Minister: Ontario boasts highly qualified education and child-care workers, bright students and parents who want what's best for their children. This morning, organizations like Fix Our Schools, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care held a press conference at Queen's Park to demand answers. Directors of education, trustees and students also attended.

The Minister of Education needs to put our students first. Kids are paying the price for her misplaced priorities. This government must recognize that it's unacceptable that kids are wearing winter coats in classrooms.

Will this government repair our schools and finally provide a safe and equal opportunity education for all Ontario students?

Hon. Liz Sandals: It might interest you to know, because it sounds as if you don't actually realize this, that every year, when we review the operating funding for school boards, we actually do increase the operating funding based on increases in utility costs, so that the school board funding is adjusted for increases in electricity and natural gas costs each year, every year, as they occur. So that is factored into school boards.

It might also interest the people in the gallery to know that we've spent \$13.9 billion to build 755 new schools in Ontario. We have built, in addition to that, 720 renovations and major additions. We have been significantly investing in our schools, and there's another \$11 billion—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

BEVERAGE ALCOHOL SALES

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Just last week, our government made a very important announcement that will boost consumer convenience and choice in Ontario. It seems only a few

weeks ago that I stood third in line behind the Premier and the finance minister at the Leslie Street Loblaws as I purchased my first six-pack of Molson Canadian and Steam Whistle beer.

Last week, we announced that in total, up to 300 grocery stores, both large chains and independents, will also now be selling wine. By this fall, 70 grocery stores will be authorized to have wine, as well as fruit wine, beer and cider, sold on their shelves.

Speaker, will the minister please tell us about the great economic opportunities that this much-appreciated announcement will create?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I would like to thank the member from Beaches–East York for the question and also for his advocacy on this matter. I know that he has been a champion of the beverage alcohol industry, and I thank him for his continuous work.

The changes will create a win-win-win outcome for the province's wine lovers, for Ontario's local domestic wine producers and the farmers who support them, as well as for wines from all over the world. By selling wine in grocery stores, we'll also help to boost economic growth and preserve jobs in Ontario's wine, agriculture and tourism sectors. This will also help to maintain a vital source of economic growth and opportunity for the province's farm sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Cheers, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the minister for his answer and for this well-deserved and well-received initiative.

These changes really are a win-win-win for farmers, consumers and retailers in Ontario. I'm particularly pleased about the fact that as part of these changes, cider and fruit wines will also now be available in grocery stores.

I know that Ontario's producers in these emerging categories—cider being the fastest-growing segment in the LCBO. I'm excited to await the successes that they will achieve when afforded wider market access.

Speaker, will the minister share with this House how this government will also benefit Ontario consumers by these changes?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Again, I would like to thank the member for the question and for the cheers; I appreciate that. I too share the excitement for the potential growth for cider producers in Ontario with these changes.

As we've announced, wine and beer producers will benefit greatly from this change, along with craft brewers and distillers; craft distillers are important here as well. They will now be able to deliver directly to restaurants and bars—a change they have long advocated for. They will also now receive better selling commissions in their on-site stores. All of these changes have taken place while our government maintains our strong commitment to social responsibility wherever beverage alcohol is sold.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Energy. We have continuously demanded that the Liberal

government do something to address the damage resulting from their disastrous energy policies—policies that have driven the price of electricity from 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour to 17.5 cents on-peak. They're driving people into poverty just to pay off their hydro bills. And what do we get from this government? They continuously make excuses, put new packaging around shell games and confuse ratepayers even more.

The bottom line is that when people pick up their hydro bills, they see them continuing to rise at alarming rates. It's not only hurting ratepayers; it's seriously damaging our economy.

Speaker, will the minister commit to a credible plan to bring in affordable energy rates in this year's budget?

1120

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I might remind the member that just several days ago, we announced \$100 million to assist 36,000 people in this province to reduce their energy bills. I might remind the member as well that that party supported us with the nuclear refurbishment projects that we just announced several months ago, which will show electricity going into the grid at seven and a half to eight cents per kilowatt hour. That's a very, very major initiative.

The National Energy Board projects our increase in electricity prices over the next 16 years for residential owners to be 1.7%, which is around the rate of inflation or less, because of the investments and decisions that we're making in the system today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I have more people in poverty than ever before, and it's because of their hydro rates. I don't need more stories and excuses. The first thing the government needs to do is to stop doing what you have been doing, because it's clearly not working.

With rates four times higher than when you came into office, and a scathing Auditor General's report that shows that consumers are paying \$37 billion more than they should have paid, it clearly highlights that there needs to be a policy reversal. Thanks for the \$100 million, but you've already overcharged them by \$37 billion.

Will the minister commit today to creating an energy plan that is credible and will bring affordable energy rates, and stop signing those exorbitant contracts for unreliable energy that are continuing to drive hydro rates up even further?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: One of the things that's happening to reduce rates is a conservation program at Hydro One. They have initiated a project which is saving those who participate, particularly in rural areas, between \$800 and \$1,200 a year. It's a heat pump program where they subsidize the installation of the heat pump. The record in Nova Scotia, and now in Ontario, with the program that they've started is saving customers between \$800 and \$1,200 a year. That's something that's really,

really concrete, in addition to the \$100 million we just invested for retrofits in the province.

We are taking very significant action in many different ways, and I would challenge the member to come to my office for a briefing on all of the things that we're doing for the electricity sector. Perhaps then the questions will be more informed.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. People don't want money from a cap-and-trade program to be used as a Liberal Party slush fund. They want to see this money actually tackling climate change, helping families to reduce their carbon footprint and save money.

And yet, the government announced several spending programs recently, including a \$3,000 rebate on a \$150,000 electric car, without showing how much greenhouse gases would be reduced by the program, if any.

Will these spending programs include transparent, evidence-based projections showing that they will actually help families and the climate, rather than just the Liberal Party of Ontario?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'll take that as support from the member opposite for the initiatives. The entire dynamic of how we measure GHGs—your point is well-taken; that will be part of the five-year action plan.

The electric vehicle program—run by my colleague the Minister of Transportation, who has provided extraordinary leadership—brings down the cost of an electric vehicle to being extraordinarily affordable. In some cases, if you're buying the Chevy Spark, it's a few thousand dollars, for seniors and for families.

It also means that electric vehicles are creating a lot of jobs, opening up our ability to attract more investment in the electric sector, and making life much more affordable. It's the same thing with our social housing and the retrofit programs the Minister of Energy is running.

These are good-news stories. They help make life more affordable. They create jobs, and it's good news.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: We've seen the Liberals have fun with numbers before. The government created the Trillium Trust as a dedicated fund for infrastructure in 2014, but then dissolved the fund as a special-purpose account just one year later. The only way we can be sure that cap-and-trade money won't be used as a slush fund is to keep the money separate.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association recommends that revenue from a cap-and-trade program flow into a separate and transparent special-purpose account and not into general government revenue. Will the government keep cap-and-trade funds separate so their use is transparent?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You don't get much more transparent than \$325 million in specific allocations announced by the President of the Treasury Board. Each one of those programs is being run, in most cases, by a

third party, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association and other partner organizations. They submit and they account directly for that funding. You can't get much more transparent than that.

Mr. Speaker, you'll see, when the climate change legislation—because I know the NDP is very good at spending money. We'll find out in the next week or two whether they'll actually support a price on pollution, which I hope they will. If they'll support a price on pollution, you will see the accounting exercise being very, very clear.

We have to meet the same standards as Quebec and California under the Western Climate Initiative, and we have third-party review by the compact of regions that we're actually making progress. There isn't a jurisdiction that is being held to a higher standard than we are.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'd like to direct my question to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. Last month, Ontario gained nearly 20,000 net new jobs, which adds to a long line of months of growth of jobs in this province. In fact, I understand that, in the last two months alone, Ontario has gained a net of 50,000 jobs. While it sounds like steady growth, I recently heard the Leader of the Opposition on CP24 insinuating that Ontario is actually losing jobs.

If the Leader of the Opposition is incorrect in that statement, I'm concerned that Ontarians may not be getting the straight facts on the strength of Ontario's economic growth. I would certainly encourage all legislators to refrain from talking Ontario's economy down and, instead, accurately—

Interjections.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Minister, please advise this House on how Ontario is doing in attracting investment and jobs.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm very pleased to confirm to the member that Ontario's economy continues to grow. Ontarians are being inundated, however, with economic news about challenges in the overall Canadian economy.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oops. The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is warned.

Please finish.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Okay, Mr. Speaker. The national news is often inundated with tough times that are taking place in our sister province, in Alberta. The fact that Ontario's economic performance has been much stronger than the national picture and is trending in a much more positive direction can sometimes get lost in that national coverage. Ontario continues to lead this country in growth and in job creation.

Here are the facts, not according to me, but Stats Canada: Since 2009, Ontario has gained 608,300 net new jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'm pleased to hear that, overall, Ontario's economy continues to be on the upswing. That's good news for Ontario workers and for families all across this province.

Many of us will be joining our municipal partners later today at the Ontario Good Roads Association/ROMA conference. While Ontario is excelling in job creation overall, I know that some regions of the province are still struggling. Some parts of the province were hit harder by global recession than others and still need some support to enjoy the overall level of growth experienced province-wide. As well, our manufacturing sector is still transitioning to global initiatives.

Can the minister share with this Legislature some of the measures he is taking to drive regional economic growth and growth in manufacturing?

Hon. Brad Duguid: What an important and timely question. While Ontario has led North America for two years in a row in attracting foreign direct investment, we continue to lead Canada in job creation and growth.

The fact is, though, some regions of our province were hit harder by the global recession than others, and some are still struggling. That's why we ignored the advice of the opposition and took the advice of our local municipal partners when we established our regional economic development funds. We've invested \$170 million through our regional economic development funds, which has leveraged \$1.8 billion in private sector investment and has created or supported over 41,000 jobs in eastern and southwestern Ontario. The vast majority of those investments are in manufacturing. In fact, over the last 12 months alone, we've seen 15,000 net new manufacturing jobs added to this province.

We're not done; we have more work to do. But we're going to continue to diligently invest in these programs.

1130

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Minister of Finance. This week is the start of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association annual conference. You may remember the Premier's speech in 2015 where she promised, "We will reform the provincial land tax ... we will bring forward proposals that can be implemented" this year. Well, Minister, it has been a year, and still silence from your government.

My question is simple: When will the Minister of Finance table reforms that will find a meaningful solution for both municipalities and Ontarians living in unorganized territories, or is this just another stretch goal?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you for the question. I appreciate the concern, because it's something that we all share, recognizing the impact it has on municipalities. We also understand the issue with regard to unincorporated lands and unincorporated properties and regions around those respective municipalities. Those consultations have been ongoing and have been proceeding. We recognize that those neighbouring municipalities want a

component share of that. The Premier made that commitment. We are working on that. In the upcoming budget, we'll have more to say.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Minister of Finance, this is an issue that requires real leadership and a real commitment to the people of northern Ontario, in both unorganized territories and municipalities. Because of this Liberal government's cuts to the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund, northern municipalities need financial assistance now more than ever. The minister promised to help, but now he's nowhere to be found.

When the Minister of Finance speaks to the rural and northern mayors at the minister's forum later today, will he apologize for breaking yet another promise?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We made a commitment to actually provide municipalities with \$505 million in unconditional funding through the OMPF. The OMPF, combined with the municipal benefit results from the provincial uploads, totals \$2.3 billion, nearly four times the level of funding provided in 2004. This is the equivalent of 13% of municipal property tax revenue in the province.

The member knows perfectly well that the OMPF has been revised, but that supports for those communities is continuing. Frankly, it was a result of the uploads and the downloading of the previous government that created a lot of havoc and a lot of stress in the system. We've uploaded. We're providing support. There are net benefits going to those municipalities. They'll continue. They have our support. Much more will be said in the budget that's going to provide them with a great degree of support. We hope we can count on your support for them as a result.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. This government has created two worlds in Ontario: There's one world where the rest of us live, and there's the other world where the Liberal government and their powerful lobbyists live, like the auto insurance industry, which currently enjoys record profits at the same time as Ontarians pay the highest auto insurance premiums in the entire country.

The government was pushed by New Democrats in 2013 to reduce auto insurance premiums by 15%. The government responded and said that they would complete this promise within two years. That timeline is long gone, and this government hasn't even achieved half of that promise. In response, the Premier has said, "Oh, that was simply a stretch goal," something they never intended completing anyway.

The timeline has passed. The Liberals have broken their promise. New Democrats call this stretch goal a broken promise. How can Ontarians trust this government to fulfill any—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. I remind the member opposite that, had we proceeded with the work we did on time and as scheduled, some of that benefit would be had now. But because of the delays and the obstructions by the members opposite, we've now had to provide for legislation that was later than expected.

The fact of the matter is, insurance rates are going down, not up. Many insurance companies, because it's a competitive industry, have already started to provide 15% reductions in their insurance premiums.

Furthermore, it's not at a point in time that matters most. It's on an ongoing basis to ensure that there's a structural change in the system to provide for lower costs of claims and better benefits for the 9.5 million drivers that exist.

We're doing our job. We hope we can count on their support going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Let's be clear: This Liberal government and this Premier have the power and the ability to reduce auto insurance premiums, but they won't because it's not a priority for this government. The government has made it clear that they're continuing to break promise after promise. The Premier likes to call those simply stretch goals: promises that they make but that they never intend to complete anyway.

In the upcoming budget, Ontarians want to see some real commitments. They want to see investments in health care. They want to see commitments to ensure that we have good-paying permanent jobs in this province. They want to see affordable auto insurance rates and they don't want to see continual slashing and cutting of our benefits. They want to see investment that actually builds transit in this province, but they know better than to trust this government. They know that this government is going to just make more stretch goals.

My question is simple: What other stretch goals can we look forward to in this upcoming budget?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Ontario currently has and will continue to have the most generous benefits anywhere in the country. That will continue. The member opposite is well aware that a number of changes are being proposed in terms of making the processing of claims more efficient to provide greater benefit to the victims and those who are in need, and to enable more affordability and more efficiency in the system. Those are the proposed changes that we're making, as well as anti-fraud measures and other things that enable the system to be less expensive.

We put those changes in place, they delayed them, and now we're trying to still catch up as a result of those delays. We're getting there. Many of these companies are competitive. They are providing for lower rates and they'll continue to do so, provided the member opposite doesn't obstruct them any further.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is for the Minister of Labour. I was pleased when the minister

introduced the Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act. First responders are at risk of PTSD due to the traumatic situations that they have to engage in and the accumulative effect of experiencing these traumatic events.

For example, during a shift as a nurse in the emergency room at Cambridge hospital, a child came in with no vital signs from a car crash. A police officer guided the stretcher, and a paramedic and firefighter performed CPR. We couldn't save him. They were very upset but had to attend to other incidents that shift. The same paramedics attended several other traumatic events during the next week. With no supports to help them cope, one paramedic was later diagnosed with PTSD. She was delayed in getting WSIB, hampering her recovery.

Can the minister please inform the House what this legislation entails and the significance it will have if passed?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank the member for her question and for the interest of all members of the House in this very important topic. Last Thursday, I introduced the Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act. Now, I know that all members in this House recognize that post-traumatic stress disorder is a very significant risk to the health and well-being of first responders in this province. Physical injuries we can spot pretty clearly; psychological injuries take a lot more.

If passed by the House, this bill is going to create a presumption that PTSD diagnosed in first responders is a result of the workers' employment. Their claims to the WSIB will be automatically approved after that. This will provide for immediate identification of the issue, immediate intervention and immediate treatment for the first responders.

I'm very proud of this bill. I hope it gets the support of the entire House.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you, Minister, for your response.

I know he has worked hard to advocate for our first responders. Some of them, including some firefighters from my community of Cambridge, came to Queen's Park to show their support when the minister announced the proposed legislation. These changes, if passed, would make a big difference in the lives of dedicated professionals who experience traumatic events in the course of their work.

This legislation supports those who are already suffering from PTSD. I know that this government has emphasized a comprehensive plan that supports cultural change to overcome stigma and provides the mental tools necessary to respond to events and build resiliency, as well as to help prevent PTSD from occurring in the first place.

1140

Can the minister please share with the House the prevention pieces of this comprehensive PTSD strategy for our first responders?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: That is an excellent question because it points out that we need a comprehensive strategy on this and that while it's important that the bill

pass—that the legislation in the House pass—it's also important that we have preventive legislation and preventive programs in this regard. So with the full support of the Premier, I brought forward what I think is a comprehensive plan that addresses the legislative portion and that also addresses the prevention portion.

Prevention initiatives are:

—we're going to have an awareness campaign that you'll be hearing on the radio very soon;

—a leadership summit in which the first responders want to see duplicated the success we had last year;

—an online tool kit for all employers in this province so that you can come from the smallest municipality and you'll have access to the same information as the city of Toronto.

There's more research emerging on this issue. Ontario is going to stay on top of that research. We're going to be a leader in this regard.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. A few days ago, the province approved the wind turbine project in my riding of Simcoe–Grey. This project will result in eight 500-foot wind turbines placed literally right next door to Collingwood Regional Airport.

The municipalities in my riding don't want this project. As I've said several times in this House, the people of my riding aren't in favour of it either. The municipalities have done a study that shows the turbines will hurt the local economy and future investment at the airport. Furthermore, this project endangers pilots and public safety.

The towers will be the tallest structures in all of rural Ontario, throughout Canada. They're as tall as the TD office tower in downtown Toronto.

Mr. Speaker, given all these points, can the Premier tell us why her government is ignoring the safety of the people of Simcoe–Grey, Canada's pilots and the local municipalities in allowing this project to proceed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I thank the honourable member for his question. We've had this conversation a few times. As he knows, in this case, we took extraordinary measures to consult, adding—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Well, maybe they don't know this, Mr. Speaker—but extending our standard—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I can't even hear myself, never mind the opposition.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Enough.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We added six months to the standard review over two years. We considered over 350 public and agency comments and looked at the economic side.

But I want to be very clear about this: Nav Canada reviewed this not once, not twice, but three times—they set the standards for air navigation—and they found no problem with it, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, albeit late, is warned. But there’s always time for another one.

Supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, Mr. Speaker, I’ve heard this gibberish from the minister before. He doesn’t know what the heck he’s talking about on this issue. Nav Can told me and the Deputy Minister of Transportation a year and a half ago that they didn’t have any rules for this sort of situation because they didn’t think that any government would be stupid enough to build eight 500-foot wind turbines close to a regional airport, so they don’t have any rules.

I hope you’re aware that you’re the only government in Canada that took away local powers to plan. You’ve changed the Planning Act. Everybody else, when they have this situation, can say, “Move your towers.” They can’t do that in Ontario.

You’ve ignored everything you’ve heard on this issue and you keep hiding behind Nav Canada, and Nav Canada told you, “Don’t put the towers there. We don’t have any rules to protect you.”

Their advice to the airport is, “If it gets really bad, close the airport. If it gets bad enough, change your runways. Move your runways.” We’re expecting tens of millions of dollars to invest in—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Let’s just review this carefully. On January 5, 2016, NAV Canada gave their first opinion, saying that the Fairview project will have minimal impact on the current or future operations of the CRA. On January 7, Transport Canada said the same thing. And on January 14, NAV Canada again provided their comments based on the town’s analysis that this is not interfering with their requirements.

We had his party in power federally, and this is a federally regulated standard. We appealed to the federal minister to review it. She did not return my phone calls, Mr. Speaker; maybe the member opposite had the same luck. This is within NAV Canada’s standards and guidelines. It is not a provincial responsibility.

Finally, it is not my decision. It is a decision of the director, of a public servant. And the member is suggesting I politicize it by inserting myself improperly and illegally in the decision—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1146 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I was remiss this morning in not introducing the grandmother and brother of our page captain Andrew Johnson. Joyce Johnson and Evan Johnson were here this morning.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader on a point of order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding today’s routine proceedings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent for a representative from each caucus to speak for up to five minutes regarding regulation 17 prior to the commencement of routine proceedings, and that members be permitted to wear Franco-Ontarian pins.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to have the motion adhered to. Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

L’hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Je tiens à accomplir deux tâches importantes aujourd’hui à l’Assemblée.

First, to deliver on a promise I made in December to speak truth about a government regulation that effectively outlawed public French-language education for a generation of schoolchildren one century ago; and second, I wish to recognize how far our province has come since that time.

De nos jours, nous célébrons la culture francophone. Les communautés francophones ont contribué à faire de l’Ontario une province dynamique et prospère.

En 2015, nous avons eu la chance de célébrer les 400 ans de la présence française en Ontario. Pour célébrer les 400 ans de la présence française en Ontario, notre gouvernement a mené diverses initiatives visant à faire connaître l’histoire des Franco-Ontariennes et Franco-Ontariens, les progrès qu’ils ont accomplis et les obstacles qu’ils ont dû surmonter.

Today, I want to acknowledge regulation 17 as one of those barriers.

Le règlement 17 a été adopté en 1912.

In 1912, regulation 17 prohibited primary schools from using French as a language of instruction or communication beyond grade 2, allowing only one hour per day for French to be taught as a subject in primary schools.

Les parents et les enseignants des écoles francophones se sont opposés farouchement au règlement 17. De nombreux enseignants ont résisté et continué d'enseigner en français.

La communauté a été encore plus choquée lorsque le gouvernement a imposé de fortes pénalités pour les infractions aux dispositions du règlement 17. Les écoles qui maintenaient l'enseignement en français perdaient leur financement. Des enseignants perdaient leur brevet.

The francophone community feared that Franco-Ontarian children were losing their language.

Les francophones ont alors renforcé leur détermination et se sont mobilisés politiquement dans la presse et devant les tribunaux. Le quotidien de langue française *Le Droit* a été fondé en 1913 avec la mission précise de s'opposer au règlement 17, et 102 ans plus tard, *Le Droit* demeure un pilier de la communauté francophone.

Au fur et à mesure que les écoles françaises autofinancées se retrouvaient à court d'argent, elles n'avaient d'autre choix que de suivre le curriculum public ou de fermer leurs portes.

The government enforced regulation 17 for more than a decade before finally conceding that the policy was a failure. But it stayed on the books much longer.

Aujourd'hui, au nom du gouvernement de l'Ontario, je présente des excuses à tous les Franco-Ontariens dont la famille et les communautés ont souffert à cause du règlement 17.

Regulation 17 showed a disregard for Franco-Ontarian identity and equality, and on behalf of the government of Ontario, I offer an apology.

I want to thank MPP Glenn Thibeault for bringing forward this motion last December.

J'aimerais remercier le député Glenn Thibeault pour avoir présenté cette résolution en décembre dernier. Je veux aussi remercier la ministre Madeleine Meilleur pour ses efforts inlassables afin de promouvoir, de protéger et de préserver le fait français en Ontario.

I want to also thank Minister Madeleine Meilleur for her tireless efforts to promote, protect and preserve the francophone presence in Ontario.

Je suis heureuse que nous ayons parmi nous aujourd'hui des personnes dont la famille ou la communauté ont été touchées par le règlement 17, de même que d'autres personnes qui ont rappelé à cette Assemblée ce chapitre de notre histoire.

Ainsi, je tiens à souligner le travail des représentants de l'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario du grand Sudbury et de son président, Denis Constantineau. Au nom du gouvernement de l'Ontario, je tiens à vous remercier.

The tremendous courage and tenacity of Franco-Ontarians has not gone unnoticed.

Vos efforts ont aidé l'Ontario à faire un bon bout de chemin au cours des 100 dernières années. Il suffit de se rappeler l'adoption honteuse du règlement 17 en 1912 et l'adoption de la Loi de 1986 sur les services en français. Nous pouvons tous être fiers du cheminement de notre province.

We can all be proud of the distance Ontario has travelled. In just a few generations, Ontario has gone from a place that was, at times, resistant to diversity to a place that fully embraces different cultures and languages—from fearing our differences to celebrating and learning from them.

Ainsi, les réalisations des Franco-Ontariens nous donnent de grands espoirs que notre société continuera à reconnaître la vérité sur notre passé et nos victoires durement gagnées. Car, c'est ainsi que nous pouvons continuer à renforcer l'égalité, à multiplier les possibilités et à donner à toutes les communautés le respect, la reconnaissance et les ressources que nous méritons tous et toutes. Merci beaucoup.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup, madame la Première Ministre.

And now, the member from Leeds–Grenville and the deputy leader.

M. Steve Clark: Je tiens à remercier la première ministre de mettre cette déclaration de l'avant. C'est un plaisir pour moi d'en discuter cet après-midi.

L'an dernier, nous avons célébré 400 ans d'existence française en Ontario, ainsi que le 40^e anniversaire du drapeau franco-ontarien.

Les francophones ont contribué à bâtir la province que nous avons aujourd'hui, avec plus de 611 000 francophones et francophiles, comme moi, vivant maintenant en Ontario.

Le caucus PC de l'Ontario reconnaît que les francophones de l'Ontario méritent des excuses du gouvernement pour le règlement 17, qui avait interdit l'utilisation de la langue française dans les écoles primaires pour 15 ans au début du 20^e siècle. Mais, les excuses devraient être accompagnées par des mesures concrètes pour promouvoir la langue française dans cette province.

Il y avait une erreur dans le passé, et il est important de reconnaître cette erreur. Mais, ce que la communauté francophone veut vraiment sont des mesures concrètes pour améliorer les services en français en Ontario.

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Je dois rappeler au gouvernement que c'est notre chef qui a été le premier chef d'un parti provincial à soutenir publiquement une nouvelle université franco-ontarienne. En effet, notre chef Patrick Brown a posé une question au gouvernement en français à l'Assemblée législative sur cette question importante pour les Franco-Ontariens.

Monsieur le Président, je prends la parole aujourd'hui au nom de ma collègue la députée Martow, qui est la porte-parole des Affaires francophones de notre parti. En fait, la députée Martow se trouve aujourd'hui à une conférence francophone.

Je suis fier du fait que notre chef Patrick Brown est bilingue et que plusieurs membres de notre caucus parlent maintenant plus en français à l'Assemblée législative.

En conclusion, j'ai eu le grand plaisir de jouer au hockey ce week-end passé, dans ma circonscription de Leeds–Grenville, avec les anciens joueurs de la Ligue

nationale de hockey de l'équipe des Canadiens de Montréal. Quel honneur et quel privilège c'était que de jouer avec ces anciens joueurs de hockey canadiens français.

Je vous remercie, monsieur le Président, de m'avoir donné cette opportunité aujourd'hui.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

Now, the leader of the third party.

M^{me} Andrea Horwath: Merci, monsieur le Président. En 1912, le gouvernement ontarien a adopté le règlement 17, qui empêchait l'enseignement du français en Ontario. Le règlement 17 représente une époque très sombre pour le peuple franco-ontarien et pour tout l'Ontario. De la part du parti néo-démocrate de l'Ontario, j'aimerais offrir mes excuses les plus sincères aux générations de francophones qui ont vécu les répercussions néfastes du règlement 17.

No government should ever pass discriminatory measures. It is appalling that francophones had their future stripped away from them because regulation 17 meant that they could no longer attend school in their mother tongue. The lasting impacts of this assimilation policy created barriers to education for francophone Ontarians for many decades.

Although much progress has been made in the realm of French-language education in Ontario, barriers still remain. Francophone children do not always have access to French schools, and we still don't have a French university governed for and by francophone Ontarians.

I hope that in remembering and apologizing for the severe consequences of regulation 17, we will all strive to continuously improve French-speaking education across this province.

Le 25 juin 1912, les élèves franco-ontariens se sont vus dépouillés de leur droit d'étudier dans leur langue. Le règlement 17 interdisait l'éducation dans la langue française à travers tout l'Ontario.

Le gouvernement de l'époque a voulu assimiler la communauté francophone. Cette loi a eu des conséquences graves sur plusieurs générations. Les francophones de l'époque, n'ayant pas accès à l'école dans leur langue maternelle, ne pouvaient apprendre à lire et à écrire correctement.

Je suis navrée et je m'excuse, au nom de tous mes collègues néo-démocrates, pour cette politique discriminatoire.

Cependant, dès l'adoption du règlement 17, les francophones s'organisent et livrent une lutte en faveur de leurs droits scolaires. Il ne faut pas oublier les échos politiques et institutionnels qui ont entouré le règlement 17 et la naissance de la revendication pour l'éducation en langue française.

La communauté franco-ontarienne ne s'est pas laissée assimiler. Elle s'est unie et s'est ralliée contre ces injustices. Nous avons vu des manifestations de plus de 1 000 personnes à Ottawa et de centaines de personnes à Sudbury contre le règlement 17. Durant cette période tumultueuse, nous avons vu la création de l'Association

canadienne-française d'éducation d'Ontario, qui deviendra l'ACFO; puis de l'AFO, qui existe toujours aujourd'hui; et du Syndicat d'Oeuvres sociales, qui fondera le quotidien *Le Droit*. Au Québec, on commence la campagne du Sou de la pensée française, pour aider les francophones de l'Ontario.

Les femmes francophones ont également revendiqué. Elles se sont unies pour protéger l'éducation en français dans leur province. La fameuse bataille des épingles à chapeaux, où des dames ont empêché les inspecteurs d'entrer et de fermer leur école en brandissant leurs épingles à chapeaux : ma collègue la députée de Nickel Belt a déposé un projet de loi afin de faire reconnaître le 29 janvier, chaque année, comme la journée de la bataille des épingles à chapeaux.

Même si de nombreux progrès ont été accomplis dans le domaine de l'éducation en langue française, nous avons toujours plusieurs problèmes d'accès à l'éducation à tous les niveaux et nous n'avons toujours pas notre Université de l'Ontario français.

Il faut souligner avec fierté les efforts que le peuple franco-ontarien a faits pour revendiquer leurs droits. Mais il ne faut surtout pas oublier les conséquences désastreuses du règlement 17 sur des générations de francophones qui ont dû vivre leur vie sans éducation, et surtout ne pas oublier les barrières qui existent encore aujourd'hui pour les jeunes francophones de cette province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements. Merci beaucoup.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LENNOX AND ADDINGTON INTERVAL HOUSE

Mr. Randy Hillier: This morning, the Lennox and Addington Interval House in Napanee was awarded the third annual Family Advocacy Award, which honours people and organizations that make a positive contribution to the lives of families.

Interval House earned this reward for their 24 years of service and their great work on helping those affected by domestic violence throughout Napanee and Lennox and Addington. Interval House has provided services which have made a great and a positive difference in many lives and provided safety to those affected by domestic violence. They have provided shelters to those brave enough to leave; resources for those attempting to help; legal information to help regain a sense of justice; and a helping and caring hand, and listening ears, to help end the isolation.

I'd like to congratulate the Lennox and Addington Interval House once again for all their great efforts, which have resulted in this award, and all that they do to improve the lives of families in Lennox and Addington and the greater Napanee region.

COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR

Ms. Jennifer K. French: February 20 marked the Coldest Night of the Year, and this past Saturday, communities across the province came together to walk for awareness of and raise funds for homelessness.

In Oshawa, our Coldest Night of the Year walk benefited The Refuge outreach centre. The Refuge does invaluable work across our community to support our homeless, hungry and hurting youth.

This year was a balmy 10 degrees, so it wasn't as cold as years prior, and we were warmed by the spirit of the volunteers and the shared purpose. In fact, there were 92 participating communities across the country, and Oshawa placed 11th in funds raised, but fifth overall in terms of number of participants. That is what community is all about.

Speaker, events like this remind us how generous our communities are, but we should not have to rely on generosity to ensure that all of our community members are safe and warm. When it comes to homelessness, this government is failing. We have a poverty reduction strategy in Ontario, but there are no measurable targets in place. In my experience, a strategy without targets isn't much of a strategy at all.

Interjection: It's a stretch.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It's a stretch. According to Ontario's chief coroner, this government doesn't even keep track of homeless deaths. They don't keep track, they don't measure and they don't seem to care.

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Homelessness is a very real challenge across the province. I challenge this government to care, to set real and measurable targets. Perhaps then we can stop relying on the generosity of communities to crowd-fund Ontario's poverty reduction.

SINGH KHALSA SEWA CLUB

Mr. Vic Dhillon: This past Christmas, the Singh Khalsa Sewa Club organized a massive food and clothing drive within my riding of Brampton West. The word "sewa" means "help without the expectation of anything in return."

The response from the community members was enthusiastic and very positive. On Christmas Day, donations of goods collected were handed over to Knights Table, a wonderful organization in Brampton West serving the needs of people dealing with the issues of poverty and homelessness.

The volunteers from the Singh Khalsa Sewa Club did not consider Christmas as just another holiday. They worked tirelessly through the week prior to Christmas to go door to door in my riding of Brampton West. In their feedback, this organization advised me that the community was very kind and generous to those in need at this special time of the year.

I look forward to working at the grassroots level with the Singh Khalsa Sewa Club to continue to work towards

integrating every member in my riding, to spread the message of the Canadian values of oneness and living in harmony.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Singh Khalsa Sewa Club and the Knights Table for all the great work they do for our community.

BERNARD CAMERON

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Bernard Cameron died tragically on February 11. He will be sadly missed by his wife, Catherine, his four children, his six grandchildren, his four brothers, his extended family and the community of Almonte, where he lived.

Bernard graduated from the University of Western Ontario, and was a much-respected high school teacher. He served as a Boy Scout leader for 25 years and was on the board of the Mississippi Valley Textile Museum. He was also elected to two terms as councillor for the municipality of Mississippi Mills.

Bernard Cameron will be greatly missed by all.

I ask that we have a moment of silence to remember Bernard Cameron.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): With the member's indulgence, can I do a unanimous consent after the rest of the statements?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR

Miss Monique Taylor: Saturday brought record temperatures to many parts of Ontario, but it was also the Coldest Night of the Year in over 40 communities across Ontario, where thousands of women, men and children walked to raise money to support their neighbours who are hungry, homeless or hurting.

On Hamilton Mountain, it was my great pleasure to head over to St. Stephen on the Mount, which was the base camp for the walk in support of Neighbour to Neighbour, our local food bank, before we headed out with 300 other walkers.

This was the third annual Coldest Night walk organized by Neighbour to Neighbour. As in past years, it was a great feeling to see our community coming together to support an organization that puts people first.

Offering housing support, family budgeting, counselling and various food programs, Neighbour to Neighbour is a vital part of our community and we are fortunate to have the dedicated staff and volunteers who run it.

The walk on the mountain raised almost \$55,000, and that was at last count. I know every penny will be put to good use.

I want to offer my sincere thanks to the organizers of the Coldest Night of the Year walk; to the event sponsors; to all who walked; and especially to the volunteers who took care of the registration, greeted us along the route and welcomed us back with a piping hot cup of chili.

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

Mr. Arthur Potts: This past weekend I participated in a series of events celebrating International Mother Language Day. My member's statement today is especially important, considering the apology that this House has heard about regulation 17, which prohibited Franco-Ontarians from being taught in their mother language.

International Mother Language Day was created in 1999 by a Bangladeshi living in Vancouver; to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity, and the value of multilingualism.

The choice of the day commemorates the killing of four students on February 21, 1952, as they protested for the right to speak Bangla in Dhaka, Pakistan, which eventually led to the independence of Bangladesh. The event reinforces the critical importance of language in preserving a people's culture, traditions and history.

In 2009, Ontario officially recognized February 21 as International Mother Language Day. Our local Bangladeshi community created a number of events to reflect the theme—I was honoured to participate in them—including an open discussion on the role of language in education and integration in Canadian society, an art and poetry competition for children in the Bangladeshi community, a large rally that went to a memorial on Danforth Avenue, and a sombre yet beautiful commemoration of those who gave their lives fighting for the right to speak their mother tongue.

We are fortunate, Speaker, to live in a province where so many languages are spoken and so many cultures are sustained through the teaching and sharing of their languages, including our First Nations languages. I encourage you and this House to join me in recognition of International Mother Language Day, to remember the sacrifice of those students so many years ago, and to celebrate those who preserve and sustain their languages today.

WIARTON WILLIE FESTIVAL

Mr. Bill Walker: As you may be aware, Wiarton is home to Canada's foremost weather prognosticator, Wiarton Willie. This year was a very special celebration as we hosted the diamond 60th anniversary of the Wiarton Willie Festival on February 2.

Groundhog Day is one of the most popular events in Ontario. Without a shadow of a doubt, it was one of the best-ever celebrations and saw thousands of visitors from all corners of the country flock to my beautiful riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound to see the world-famous albino groundhog cast his shadow and declare six more weeks of winter.

I was also pleased to host our party's leader, Patrick Brown, during his first visit to the festival, as well as my colleague Randy Pettapiece from Perth-Wellington, who also has a cottage in nearby Lion's Head.

Everyone enjoyed a great weekend, which featured a festival queen pageant, hockey tournaments, curling bonspiels, ice carving, buskers and a zoo, just to name a few family-friendly events. None of this fun would have been possible without the genius idea of its founder, Mac McKenzie, who sent out invitations to the first Groundhog Day gathering, held in his backyard in 1956 in an effort to break the winter blues.

Willie has always been well-cared for over the years by handlers John Makela, Sam Brouwer and Don Crain. This year Willie's prediction was six more weeks of winter, which put him at odds with that of his Pennsylvania counterpart, Punxsutawney Phil, and Shubenacadie Sam in Nova Scotia. But that's okay. This was not the first time Willie generated excitement.

You see, I was the spin doctor, the spokesperson in 1999, and Tom Ashman and Dee Cherrie-Ashman were key organizers in the year of his infamous demise, when the albino prognosticator passed away just days before Groundhog Day. We garnered media attention from all around the world and had so many messages of condolence and well wishes that it crashed our Internet: over one million hits in three hours.

Fortunately, Willie's son Wee Willie, who had tunnelled his way to our nation's capital, returned and continues making the annual famous predictions for the whole world to hear.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome Willie.

YOUTH BOCCE CANADA

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to recognize today Youth Bocce Canada, which is proudly associated with Special Olympics Ontario, and their 23rd Youth Bocce Canada championship for athletes with special needs, which is happening this Friday, February 26 at the Amesbury Sports Complex in my riding of York South-Weston.

This exceptional organization was founded in 1994 by my constituent Lee Prioriello, whose passion, vision and dedication have affected so many. The organization's mission is to support over 400 athletes with special needs in the GTA and York region. The game of bocce is used to promote participation, socialization and a sense of community.

The championship taking place this next Friday is extremely important to special-needs youth as it gives them a chance to participate in a sport in a team environment. Remarkably, Youth Bocce Canada hosts the largest bocce tournament in all of Canada. It also provides bursary awards for special financial needs participants and organizes pilgrimages with small groups of participants. They have travelled to France, to Italy and to the Vatican.

Youth Bocce Canada is a private organization; it is not funded by the government. All events are made possible with the support of many committed sponsors that purchase advertisements in the Youth Bocce Magazine.

Congratulations to Youth Bocce Canada on their tournament, to Lee Prioriello as the founder, and thank you to all of the volunteers for all they do for the special youth and kids in our community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Grazie.

COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'm always honoured to rise in this House and speak about some great work that's happening in my riding. Just this past weekend, in the riding of Sudbury, we were part of a national campaign which is called the Coldest Night of the Year. It's a walk held around the country that raises money for the hungry, the homeless and the hurting in 100-plus cities.

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What I'm very proud of, Mr. Speaker, is two things: First off, about 300 people in my riding participated in this walk, and over \$50,000 was raised to help programs in my great riding of Sudbury that help the homeless and the hungry. Specifically the Samaritan Centre, which is a phenomenal place and does great work, ranked 13th out of 2,800 teams of walkers. They did great work. We also had four teams in Sudbury that were in the top 100 nationally, and seven walkers from Sudbury were also in the top 100 nationally. So not only are we doing great work to try and raise funds to help the homeless in my community; we're also caring for them and giving them fellowship.

I should also mention, Mr. Speaker, that the member from Newmarket–Aurora was also part of this walk in his great community, and so was the member from Durham. So we're doing great things, not only as a government, but our communities are doing great things as well.

BERNARD CAMERON

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills has deferred unanimous consent for his friend Mr. Bernard Cameron. He's seeking unanimous consent for a moment's silence. Do we agree? Agreed.

Could I have all members please stand for a moment of silence in honour of Bernard Cameron.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pray be seated.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LICENSED HOME INSPECTORS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LES INSPECTEURS D'HABITATIONS TITULAIRES D'UN PERMIS

Mr. Dong moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 165, An Act to regulate home inspectors / Projet de loi 165, Loi visant à réglementer les inspecteurs d'habitations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Han Dong: In my riding of Trinity–Spadina, there have been a lot of changes. There are a lot of homes being bought up by younger families, and I just heard over and over in my constituency that this is very, very necessary to provide a layer of consumer protection. I think this is the time to do it, and I hope all members will be, after they study the details of the bill, supportive of this bill.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, new rule, Speaker? Okay.

SUPPLY ACT, 2016

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2016

Ms. Matthews moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 166, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016 / Projet de loi 166, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2016.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: No, sir.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of bills?

Without the prodding from the member from Timmins–James Bay, I have an intent to make a comment on introducing private members' bills or government bills. It's always done with a simple statement that is in the explanatory notes. If you were to make reference to that, if the explanatory note is very long, we're asking you to make a short précis of that explanatory note. So stay focused. It's not the time to do debates or comments about your ridings or anything, other than to tell us what the bill is. Thank you very much.

PETITIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current government under Premier Kathleen Wynne is calling for the sale of up to 60% of Hydro One shares into private ownership; and

“Whereas the decision to sell the public utility was made without any public input and the deal will continue to be done in complete secrecy; and

“Whereas the loss of majority ownership in Hydro One will force ratepayers to accept whatever changes the new owners decide, such as higher rates; and

“Whereas electricity rates are already sky-high and hurting family budgets as well as businesses; and

“Whereas ratepayers will never again have independent investigations of consumer complaints, such as the Ontario Ombudsman’s damning report on failed billing; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario are the true owners of Hydro One and they do not believe the fire sale of Hydro One is in their best interest;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To protect Ontario ratepayers by stopping the sale of Hydro One.”

I fully support this, will affix my name and send it with page Owen.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition named “End the Wait-lists for IBI/ABA Services Now.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas applied behaviour analysis (ABA) and intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) are the only recognized evidence-based practices known to treat autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and

“Whereas the combined number of children waiting for ABA and IBI therapies in Ontario is approximately 16,158; and

“Whereas estimates from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services for 2015-2016 indicate that only five more children are receiving IBI this year compared to last year and, shockingly, the number of children receiving ABA has dropped by almost 1,000 in the past two years—despite the fact that the wait-list is growing; and

“Whereas it is well known that early detection and early intervention is crucially important for children with ASD to learn to their fullest potential, and these programs set the stage for growth and development throughout children’s lives; and

“Whereas some families are being forced to remortgage houses or move to other provinces while other families have no option but to go without essential therapy; and

“Whereas the Premier and her government should not be balancing the budget on the backs of kids with ASD and their families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario immediately end the chronic wait-lists for IBI/ABA services for kids with autism spectrum disorder.”

I couldn’t agree with this more. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to page Richard to bring to the Clerk.

LUNG DISEASE

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I’ve had a petition come in from around Ontario. This one is signed by people from Mississauga, Burlington and Haliburton. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths” in Ontario “(cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, *Your Lungs, Your Life*, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To allow for deputations on” the “private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee, to expedite” its passage through to royal assent.

I agree with the petition, sign my name and give it to Ryan to bring to the table.

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HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the price of electricity has skyrocketed under the Ontario Liberal government;

“Whereas ever-higher hydro bills are a huge concern for everyone in the province, especially seniors and others on fixed incomes, who can’t afford to pay more;

“Whereas Ontario’s businesses say high electricity costs are making them uncompetitive, and have contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs;

“Whereas the recent Auditor General’s report found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional \$133 billion over the next 18 years if nothing changes;

“Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff (FIT) contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the debt retirement charge, the global adjustment and smart meters that haven’t met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

"Whereas the sale of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and will likely only lead to even higher hydro bills;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To listen to Ontarians, reverse course on the Liberal government's current hydro policies and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills."

I support this petition, and I've also affixed my signature to it.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the cost of living in Ontario is high and skyrocketing rental costs are creating a city where too many people are living on the edge, or are falling into poverty;

"Whereas many tenants in Ontario are not protected by provincial rent control guidelines, and as a result some Ontarians are seeing their rents arbitrarily increased, and in some cases by arbitrarily large sums;

"Whereas fixing this simple loophole in the law will help protect tenants and help make housing a bit more affordable for thousands of Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario acts to protect tenants in Ontario and immediately moves to ensure that all Ontario tenants living in buildings, mobile home parks and land-lease communities are covered by the rent control guidelines in the Building Code Act, 1992, and the Residential Tendencies Act, 2006."

I agree with this. I'm going to sign it and give it to Ryan to be delivered to the table.

ELECTRONIC BIKES

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have here a "Petition for updated and increased regulation of electronic bikes and scooters in the province of Ontario:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electronic bikes and scooters (e-bikes) are legal to operate in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas they are recognized as being environmentally friendly in their responsible use of electricity over gasoline; and

"Whereas they provide a relatively affordable means of transportation relative to automobile ownership, taxis or public transit, and provide a level of independence and mobility to individuals with little or no income, or those living on pensions; and

"Whereas the number of e-bikes on Ontario roads has increased significantly since the initial pilot program in 2009; and

"Whereas there appears to be confusion among the operators of e-bikes, gas-powered scooters and mopeds on what rules and laws apply to their safe and responsible

use—including driving on sidewalks, driving the wrong way, ignoring street signs and traffic lights, and driving in pedestrian crosswalks; and

"Whereas the size and weight of e-bikes makes them an injury risk, despite being restricted to moving at slower speeds than automobiles and bicycles; and

"Whereas the increased use of e-bikes will likely continue over the near-term;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Transportation conduct a review of the Highway Traffic Act with the goal of regulating e-bikes and e-scooters as motorized vehicles, subject to the same laws as electronic or hybrid automobiles, including the need for vehicle registration, operator training, insurance, licensing and regular safety inspections."

I agree with this petition and leave it with Andrew.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario about lower hydro rates.

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and" energy "rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

"Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

"Whereas the recent announcement to implement the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

I agree with this and I will send it down with page Richard.

PARTNER ASSAULT RESPONSE PROGRAM

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario called "Halt the Changes to Partner Assault Response."

"Whereas Partner Assault Response (PAR) is the only government-funded program designed to change the behaviours of men who abuse; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has created a crisis in PAR by arbitrarily reducing the length of the program from 16 weeks to 12 weeks, without any research to support this change; and

"Whereas the changes to PAR were made contrary to the advice provided to the government by violence-against-women experts, front-line agencies, PAR providers, and provincial leaders across the sector; and

"Whereas the 2009 report of the Domestic Violence Advisory Council recommended that PAR be enhanced to include voluntary access and differentiated interventions as part of a comprehensive strategy to end violence against women;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Attorney General immediately halt the changes to PAR until a comprehensive review of the program can be conducted based on full and meaningful consultation with PAR providers and violence-against-women sector organizations and agencies."

I couldn't agree more. I affix my name to it and will give it to page Tristan to take to the table.

LUNG DISEASE

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I've got another petition here, and it comes from folks in Oakville, Mississauga and Milton. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, *Your Lungs, Your Life*, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on" the "private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite" through "to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I agree with the petition, sign my name and give it to Suzanne to take down.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Whereas the government announced the cancellation of the Ontario Self-Employment Benefit (OSEB) program on May 15, 2015;

"Whereas this program has helped thousands of men and women who were unemployed and unable to find sustaining employment to become successful entrepreneurs;

"Whereas clients of this program have had a much higher probability of five-year survival than average businesses of similar size starting without help in Canada;

"Whereas these results have had a large positive economic impact in the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reverse the decision to cancel the OSEB program."

I fully support this petition.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas mental illness affects people of all ages, educational and income levels, and cultures; and

"Whereas one in five Canadians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime and only one third of those who need mental health services in Canada actually receive them; and

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"Whereas mental illness is the second leading cause of human disability and premature death in Canada; and

"Whereas the cost of mental health and addictions to the Ontario economy is \$34 billion; and

"Whereas the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions made 22 recommendations in their final report; and

"Whereas the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, 2015, seeks to implement all 22 of these recommendations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, 2015, which:

"(1) Brings all mental health services in the province under one ministry, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

"(2) Establishes a single body to design, manage and coordinate all mental health and addictions systems throughout the province;

"(3) Ensures that programs and services are delivered consistently and comprehensively across Ontario;

“(4) Grants the Ombudsman full powers to audit or investigate providers of mental health and addictions services in Ontario.”

I fully support this petition and give it to page Tristan to deliver.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Sorry to have to say, but that concludes the time we have available for petitions this afternoon.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING ONTARIO'S FIRST RESPONDERS ACT (POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER), 2016

LOI DE 2016 D'APPUI AUX PREMIERS INTERVENANTS DE L'ONTARIO (ÉTAT DE STRESS POST-TRAUMATIQUE)

Mr. Flynn moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 163, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 and the Ministry of Labour Act with respect to posttraumatic stress disorder / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail et la Loi sur le ministère du Travail relativement à l'état de stress post-traumatique.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Labour to lead off the debate.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to rise today on a bill such as this. I'd like to say right from the outset I'll be sharing my time with my own parliamentary assistant, the member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

I stand with some pride today to lead off second reading debate for Bill 163. We all know that Ontario's first responders protect our communities with pride and diligence, and I've said before many times—and other people around this House have certainly agreed with me and expressed the same sentiment—that it appears within our first responders' community that the first word in their vocabulary appears to be “action.” When they rush into that burning building or when they pull that child from a car on the QEW in a traffic accident, or they respond to a crime perhaps or they subdue an inmate or even calm an explosive situation in our corrections facilities, what these people do on our behalf is they put their own physical and mental safety at risk.

When a first responder suffers a physical injury, it's quite evident; you can see it. There's bleeding; there's bruising, there are signs of trauma, and if WSIB is needed in that regard, we have those benefits in place and the process to have that approved is pretty clear and is a relatively easy one. In most cases, it's very straightforward. A physical injury is very easy to diagnose, as I said. It's quite visible and you can easily relate that to a work-related incident.

What's a little tougher is when you're trying to apply that same discipline, that same evidence to psychological injuries in the workplace. Psychological injuries in the workplace have been tremendously underestimated by governments all around the world for a long time, and just as the research is being done and more information is coming to light about the impact that anxiety, depression or some of the other mental illnesses can have on a person in the workplace, the issue of PTSD is one that has been ignored by this society for far too long. Often, in the past, it was associated with people who had served in the Armed Forces. It wasn't always called PTSD; it wasn't always called post-traumatic stress disorder.

I think people who had a relative who served in the First World War, for example, might say that granddad doesn't talk about the war much or, “If I ask granddad a question about the war, he doesn't really want to talk about it.” Then, when we got to the Second World War and the Korean theatre, people started talking about it in terms of shell shock. I think there was a realization there was a causal relation between the trauma that someone in the armed services had experienced and the impact it had on their lives when they tried to return to society. The armed services around the world and in Canada attempted to come to grips with that.

As a result of this, I've had the privilege of meeting on a number of occasions with former Senator Roméo Dallaire. If there's a person in this country that has led the charge on this issue, I think it's been him. As a man that served his country, put his life on the line, saw atrocities in Africa that we could only imagine, came back to Canada and began to talk about what he had seen, the impact that it had on him and also the impact that it had on his colleagues, those men and women that he served with in the armed services—he puts the issue under your nose and he makes you deal with it. He's not gentle in his comments at all—he's very factual—but you can tell he certainly has the best interests of those people that he served with in the Canadian Armed Forces right at the front of his thoughts when he's talking to people about PTSD.

PTSD is a very serious, debilitating injury, and there are different types of symptoms to it. We also started to realize, as a result of what we were seeing in the armed services, that some of the same symptoms that accompany PTSD were also impacting upon those people who are first responders. These are the people that we would know as our paramedics, our corrections officers, our firefighters and, of course, our police officers. We ask them to go into situations that we either prefer to think do not exist, or just simply that we don't feel equipped to do ourselves. Sometimes we don't appreciate the situations we're sending people into. These could be from police services that are in the employ of regions, of local government, of the OPP itself, or of the RCMP, at the federal level. These folks calm violent situations; they often go into situations where they put their own life on the line.

This can cause symptoms. They can include the re-experiencing, for example, of an event or a series of

events. Post-traumatic stress disorder sufferers can endure very negative moods and cognitive difficulties, such as the loss of memory. In severe cases, it manifests itself in increased reactivity, aggression, recklessness, or even sometimes, regrettably and unfortunately, it can cause people to decide to end their own life.

Every working person in Ontario is covered by the WSIB. If you work for a company that is covered by the WSIB, you are covered for traumatic mental stress. You're covered for post-traumatic stress disorder.

However, as with other injuries, there's a claim process that you have to go through to obtain that coverage and to ensure that coverage is valid, and that can be very, very challenging for somebody who is going through post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms. Under our current system, a worker that's suffering from traumatic mental stress that has a diagnosis such as PTSD must prove to the WSIB that the injury is, in fact, work-related. What this often asks the individual to do is to relive the incident, sometimes over and over and over again, as the evidence is being collected. That could have the impact of actually increasing the trauma that's associated with the disorder.

Then there's the wait time, as the claim is being processed, as the claim is going through the normal process that a claim would go through. There's a period of time for adjudication, and that period of time sometimes could be very, very valuable time to somebody that is dealing with PTSD. Now, what we've been able to find to date—and the research is coming in on a daily basis—is that the people in our society that we refer to as first responders are at least twice as likely, compared to the general population, to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. That simply is due to the risk of that frequent exposure we have to the triggers of traumatic stresses that are at the root of post-traumatic stress disorder. Exposure can come from a number of areas. It can come from just ordinary things in the daily event of doing their jobs, protecting our communities, but I don't think there's anybody in this House who would not agree that if these folks get injured, if our first responders find themselves in a position that they've injured themselves either physically or mentally, we need to provide those first responders with exactly the same support and exactly the same service they provide us when we need them the most.

1400

That is really what is at the heart of Bill 163. If passed by this House—and I certainly hope that happens, and I hope it happens in quick order—the legislation is going to provide a sense of security to first responders in the province of Ontario. As I mentioned previously, I don't want anybody to misunderstand that. Every working person in Ontario covered by the WSIB is covered for post-traumatic stress disorder. But because our first responders are twice as likely to get PTSD, what Bill 163 would do is it would create a presumption that PTSD diagnosed in first responders is actually as a result of the workers' employment and their claim to WSIB would be accepted very quickly.

What that allows for is that early identification, by a psychiatrist or by a psychologist, which we know is so important to mental health diagnosis. It also allows for the early intervention—it allows for the individuals themselves, or the association or the government or the employer or the WSIB—to take place so that things can start to happen very quickly. What that leads to is that very early treatment that everybody says is so important to the outcome of anybody dealing with an issue such as PTSD.

We spent a good amount of time preparing this bill. We did that for a reason. We knew that presumptive legislation is what would deal with people who already had PTSD and those who are likely to get PTSD in the future. It would allow us to deal with that. But, Speaker, in a sense, you could look at that as a failure, because what you're saying is that PTSD at this point in time is incurable. It can be managed, you can cope with PTSD much better, but the expert research that I'm getting today tells me at this point in time—and hopefully this changes very soon—that the disorder does not have a cure. Once you have it, you deal with it, to some degree, for the rest of your life. Some of the outcomes can be very positive, though. You can deal with it, you can manage it properly and you can live a relatively normal life.

But that just drives home the point that as much as presumptive legislation is important, what you really want to do is make sure that people don't get PTSD in the first place. You need to do everything you possibly can to ensure that doesn't happen.

The professions we have looked at, the police officers, the firefighters, the paramedics, the emergency medical attendants, the correctional officers, youth service workers in our secure facilities, the dispatchers of police, firefighter and ambulance services, and, of course, our First Nations emergency response team—when you look at each and every one of them, you realize there are things that can be done within the organizations themselves to build resiliency in those people, to do the debriefs after particularly bad circumstances or when they've been out to a bad call, to get everybody together to talk about it. It's often the colleagues, it's often the people themselves, who see the change in the individual that could lead to the diagnosis, that could lead to the person taking some action themselves and deciding that perhaps they do need some treatment.

What we're saying is that both are important. The preventive side—we're covering that off, I think, in the right way. What we're doing is we're putting tools online so that you can be the smallest fire department in small-town Ontario—I want you to have access to exactly the same information that the city of Toronto has or the city of Hamilton has or Oakville has or the larger, more sophisticated fire departments, police detachments; smaller correctional facilities, for example. We want everybody in Ontario who is a first responder to have access to the most up-to-date information. That's why we're putting the online tool in.

As we led up to my introduction of Bill 163, last year, as a result of what first responders told us—they said, “You know, you really need to get all the biggest and brightest minds on PTSD together in Toronto.” They didn’t say Toronto, but it seemed to be the sensible place to do it.

So what we did is we invited some of the most outstanding academics and we invited people from associations. Our guest speaker was former Senator Roméo Dallaire, and if you’ve heard him speak about PTSD, he doesn’t give you a choice to deal with it; he tells you you’ll deal with it and then he’ll tell you how you will deal with it, or the best way to deal with it. He does it with such charm that it seems like you’re doing it because you want to do it, and that, I think, is how we all should feel about this.

We had the summit, and people left that day. It was a day-long summit, and people talked to each other. The armed services came, police came, fire came, corrections came, organized labour came and academia came. Everybody told us what they knew about PTSD and what they were doing within their own organizations. That was a day well spent. It was so well spent and the feedback has been so positive that they’ve asked us to do this on an annual basis.

They’ve asked the Ministry of Labour if they would host that summit on an annual basis because we see emerging trends in this field. It’s changing, and the ground is shifting under our feet in a positive way. We’re learning more and more about PTSD, so let’s get that information out to as many organizations and let’s have a sharing of best practises. That was something that we certainly were quite pleased to do and will continue to do, as part of our preventive program on this.

Speaker, research is so important. Research from around the world is telling us things about post-traumatic stress disorder that we simply haven’t dealt with in the past. We simply haven’t known the impact of PTSD, and we simply haven’t realized the things we can do about PTSD. That is changing, and it’s changing, as I said, in a very, very positive way.

In the past decade, we’ve been able to reduce the incidence of health-related incidents, accidents, fatalities by about 40% in the province of Ontario. Ontario is the safest place in all of North America to work. We should all be proud of that, but we shouldn’t be satisfied with that, because we still have incidents that take place. A reduction of over 40% in that period of time is something that we should aspire to in the treatment of PTSD as well. If we can reduce the incidence of PTSD in this province by 40% over the next period of time, we will have served our first responders very, very well.

Those are some of the things we have done from a preventive perspective. The one thing you’ll be hearing about in about a month to six weeks is a digital awareness program and educational program that will be airing on the radio and on the digital media. While it’s aimed at first responders, there’s a message for all of us: The rising interest and appreciation of the impact of mental

illness, both on our families and on individuals, and on the economy, is something that we need to pay much more attention to.

When you look at some of the figures, when you look at some of the impacts, it’s absolutely staggering. The number one cost of disability programs for employers in Canada isn’t physical injuries or physical illness; it’s mental illness. It’s something where employers—smart employers—are starting to realize that if they do a better job, it means that they’ll have better employees, less absenteeism and less presenteeism. It’s nothing but good things for the economy for those companies that get a grip on this issue very, very early. We’re starting to see that. The one obviously that would jump off the page, without picking on one in a favourable way, is the work that Bell Canada has been able to do in this regard, to put mental illness right on the forefront when it comes to public interest.

The diagnosis of PTSD would have to be made by either a psychiatrist as we define a psychiatrist in the Mental Health Act, or a psychologist who is a member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario, but also it can be a person that’s authorized to practice psychology in another province or in another territory of Canada. We’re hoping that those services are made available.

We realized some best practices when I’ve been talking to people about this issue, and I want to just take a second to highlight what they did in the region of Durham with their police services. It’s very progressive, Speaker. As part of their collective agreement, if you’re an employee of the police services in Durham, you have unlimited access to psychological services. That means that if you need to go six days a week, 52 weeks of the year, it’s covered. It’s part of the collective agreement. And what I’m told is that even though it’s in the collective agreement and a negotiation takes place at the expiry of each of the terms of that agreement, the employer would not get rid of that provision if they could, because they see the value in it. The other day, at the same time I was making the announcement on Bill 163, I also heard that somebody else is going to adopt that very, very soon as well. I don’t know which service it is.

1410

Certainly, I think when employers start to realize that prevention is the way to go, that quick intervention is the way to go—it just makes sense. It just makes you think there’s some hope that employers and the general public, first responders—everybody is starting to understand that this is an issue we need to come to grips with in a very comprehensive way.

Bill 163 is part of a comprehensive strategy. It has the preventive side to it, and it’s also dealing with the respect and dignity that our first responders deserve, should they unfortunately end up with the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

There’s nothing like a little transparency and a little sunlight to make sure that people do the right thing. I’ve met with, as I’ve travelled around the province, some incredible leaders in the organizations that employ our

police officers, firefighters, correctional folks, and all the others—paramedics—who are covered under this act. What I'm going to do is I'm going to ask each and every one of those employers to file with me their prevention plan, to file with the Minister of Labour their prevention plan, so it shows how they're going to deal with the people who work for them. It shows the proactive work that they'll be doing; it shows the preventive programs. And I'm going to make those plans public. So the town of Oakville will know what the city of North Bay is doing. The city of Windsor will know what Sudbury is doing. Everybody around the province will know what the best information is possibly available on this issue. A lot of that will be handled by our Public Services Health and Safety Association. That will be the repository for this information, Speaker.

I think if somebody is preparing a plan and they know that it's going to be made public, that the rest of the province or people who are particularly interested in this issue are going to read that plan, I suspect there's an extra incentive in that to do a really good job of it. You want to stand up, I think, as an employer of police officers or firefighters or paramedics, corrections officers—ourselves, we are the employers of corrections officers, the government of Ontario. We're the employer of the OPP. We will want to stand up, every employer will want to stand up in this province and be proud of the work that they've put in place, of the plan that they've put in place.

To summarize, the Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act, if passed, is going to provide presumptive PTSD coverage for first responders. It's going to permit me, as the Minister of Labour, to make sure that employers file those prevention plans with me—from employers that, obviously, are affected by this.

We've learned through talks with our first responders, through both the round table we had on traumatic mental stress and our summit on work-related traumatic mental stress, that we need protections in place, as I said before, that not only treat the people who already have PTSD, but that ensure as few people as possible end up with PTSD in the first place. It's a balanced approach.

Some people, in the past, were urging me to do it a shorter way, to perhaps not provide as much coverage as we'll be providing in Bill 163, and to not pay as much attention to the prevention. I know it's always tempting to take the shorter route, especially when you know people out there are suffering with PTSD and want to see that fast action. But I can't tell you how much I'm glad that we took the time. We talked to the right people. We kept the opposition as informed as we possibly could on this. We took the time to get this right, Speaker. I think that the combination of the preventive and the legislative arms of this is going to be what really serves our first responders well. That's exactly what we have before us. That's exactly what I'm speaking to the House about for the first time. It's part of this comprehensive approach. As I said before, it's as much about prevention as it is about legislation.

A lot of the associations, a lot of the unions, a lot of the stakeholders have been coming forward and offering

me advice as to what I should do. What I'm asking them to do is to help me as Minister of Labour, because one of the biggest issues we have and have had around all types of mental illness, including PTSD, is the stigma that still surrounds the issue in some organizations. It's probably one of the biggest challenges in having a person step forward and say, "Something's wrong here. I need some help." The reason that they haven't in the past is that the culture within the organizations asks that person to run the risk of being perceived as a weak individual, or as a damaged individual, or that they've got a condition that they should somehow be embarrassed about or ashamed of.

Speaker, we need to change that. The people who can do that—I'll be doing the awareness programs. The Ministry of Labour will be doing the awareness program. I hope people pass this legislation in very, very short order. We're going to put the prevention aspect of this in place. But the people who can do the most about this are the peers and the colleagues of the individuals themselves. If they can get their colleagues to step forward, if they talk to their colleagues, if they put in place a culture or an environment where a person knows that if they do step forward and say, "I need some help here," they're going to be lifted up and their colleagues will support them, then there won't be any of the ridicule, shame or fear of embarrassment that maybe would have accompanied that in the past.

I've seen a change since I chaired the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions with a number of the people in this House. I can remember, when I was asked to chair the committee, some politicians from all stripes came up to me and said, "Now, why would you want to do that?" The implication of that question, I think, was that somehow I'd picked an issue that nobody cared about, and exactly the opposite is true. Since that select committee started meeting, there has been just an outpouring of a desire to want to talk about this issue, finally. People weren't hiding their past; they weren't hiding their family members anymore. People have begun talking about PTSD and mental health in a way that I just don't think we could have imagined five or 10 years ago, and that is a very, very good thing.

That is why I think the individuals within the organizations and the associations themselves can play a leadership role in getting that information out to the members. They need to be able to step forward—confidentially, of course, Speaker; this doesn't have to be a public undertaking. But certainly the individuals who are dealing with it need to know that where they work is a place that cares about them—and not just the management, but the people they work with as well—and there's no lack or loss of respect as an outcome of having the courage and the common sense to step forward, the same way we would for any other injury.

We'll be making this information available online, and I'm hoping that people will avail themselves.

Speaker, members and leaders of all the parties in this House have stood up today and pledged their support for

first responders, and for help for those who need it: those responders who are currently suffering from PTSD or who are in occupations where PTSD becomes a real risk. Today we are debating Bill 163, the Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act, and I'll be the first to say that it's not a moment too soon. I urge all of us in this House to act in solidarity and quickly pass the legislation, so that our first responders can quickly access the immediate identification, the immediate intervention and the immediate treatment they need to deal with this debilitating injury.

1420

Speaker, it's been a pleasure to work with the first responders, it's been a pleasure to work with the employers of first responders, and it's been a pleasure to work with the opposition and in particular the member for Parkdale-High Park, who certainly has done this House a great service by continuing to put the issue under the nose of all of us here and has asked us to deal with it.

I think we can send a message to our first responders in the province of Ontario. We can tell them that we support them. We can tell them that, partisan politics aside, this is an issue that this entire House feels is overdue. The best way we can do that, as quickly and responsibly within the confines of the rules of the House and the committee process, is get this bill through that process as quickly as possible and get the positive effects right into the first responders' community.

Thank you for the time today, Speaker. It's been a real honour to be able to speak to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. I recognize the member from Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I was listening to the minister's very passionate speech on this important bill. As you know, Mr. Speaker, he—not by accident, I was going to say—chaired the all-party select committee on mental health and now he's the Minister of Labour and introducing this legislation on post-traumatic stress disorder. He has a real, on-the-ground knowledge of the critical importance of recognizing the impacts that mental illness has on the workplace, on families and on society in general. I know the minister is extremely passionate about this bill and I know the member from Parkdale-High Park has that same passion.

That's why this bill really expresses that incredible determination to do something about the people in our society who are the defenders of safety—our safety. They experience some of the worst, most horrible things you'll ever see, and sometimes those experiences really incapacitate them. But in the past, these horrible experiences by our firefighters and our police officers were something you kept to yourself. You wouldn't even share these horrible experiences with your colleagues because I guess the attitude used to be, "Well, you've got to tough it out. You'll get over it. You've got to get back to the job."

As research has found and as first-hand experiences have demonstrated, it is sometimes totally incapacitating

for an individual who's experienced a horrific car accident, a shooting, someone who gets burned to death in a fire. How could you expect someone to go right back to work the next day as if nothing had happened?

That's the way it used to be. Many of these front-line defenders of public safety were never given any kind of support, counselling, or certainly weren't even allowed to take time off to recover from this traumatic experience. So over the years, there have been a lot of cries for help from our first responder communities to recognize that this type of trauma that is experienced on a regular basis by our front-line responders needs some special attention as it relates to someone's ability to continue to work.

It is impossible in many cases for them to work. It affects different people in different ways. In some cases, a police officer or a correctional officer may witness something that haunts them for the rest of their life. They cannot function—never mind on the job, they can't even function at home with their family. So it's not just something that happens when you punch the clock. This kind of trauma can impact a person's total life. That's why this bill finally recognizes that this is a serious health issue, it's a serious workplace issue, and some of our laws need to be changed to ensure that when a first responder undergoes this kind of trauma, they get some recognition that this is a condition that needs medical support, staff support, peer support. It's something that needs comprehensive attention. That's what Bill 163 does.

I think the fact that this post-traumatic stress disorder is being recognized in first responders is going to do a lot to help the general population, who also go through traumatic experiences in the workplace. I think the minister said that the biggest cost to workplace productivity is not physical accidents or illnesses, but mental illness and mental conditions that are costing all kinds of people productivity in our workplaces. By bringing this issue forward for first responders, I think we're doing something that's going to benefit the whole population, because it relates to everyone who goes through these traumatic experiences. It impacts their mental health.

Up until recently, you always kept these mental health challenges in a secret compartment. You never talked about them within your family, and certainly you didn't talk about mental health in your workplace, with the fear that you might be stigmatized, that you might be ostracized. Therefore, a person suffering from a trauma in the workplace could never get any help, because you couldn't talk about it. You couldn't share it with your family, you couldn't share it with the people at work, you couldn't get any support, and therefore you basically became an island unto yourself, without any kind of support.

This went on in all families, in all walks of life, and it went on especially in our first responder community, because there was a taboo about talking about it. You weren't allowed to basically stand up and say, "Listen, I need help. That accident that I witnessed last night," or that situation they witnessed in the correctional institu-

tion, "I couldn't talk about it." You had to keep it within yourself, therefore causing that person, essentially, to be in a situation where they were unable to perform their duties.

In the previous existing laws, you basically had to prove that you had this disorder. You can imagine: You just went through hell, and then you had to go through hell over and over again, trying to explain to the interviewers, the people who assessed you, the people at WSIB, the human resources people—you had to go through it again, trying to convince them that you were legitimately in need of help. You almost compounded the tragedy, the trauma, with the system we have, because there was no presumption that this was an existing health condition that didn't have to go through these challenges, and that sometimes it could take place over one, two, three, four years. So that person never got the help. They were continually badgered. They were sometimes ostracized and told, "Well, you know, you're not up to it."

That kind of anguish that people have gone through is really what this bill tries to eliminate. If someone is in a traumatic situation—and, as I said, there is a vast variety of things that our first responders, our ambulance operators, our police, see on a daily basis. They see horrible accidents, situations that occur on a regular basis. It's not the type of thing they show on television, these antiseptic television shows that show always the Hollywood approach to these horrible situations. These are gut-wrenching, sickening situations that literally bring people, grown men and women, down to their knees, and in some cases they can't get up again. Fortunately, some are able to get through these traumatic experiences, but in many cases they could not. With some help and support, they could recover and get back to work.

1430

What this bill tries to do is ensure that there is help, there is support, and there's greater awareness in all workplaces about the need to have preventive strategies, to have best practices shared, and to just change the mindset of employers—especially the ones who employ first responders—and what their attitude is toward these traumatic experiences.

So that's what Bill 163 tries to do. It is a comprehensive bill that deals with all kinds of different component parts of this serious situation. It's something that government cannot do by itself, but it's government's job to set the table so that all the employers, all the professional associations and all the medical personnel out there understand that this is now something that needs a comprehensive response. It needs a uniform protocol across the province in all associations and municipalities, various government departments, various private employers, whatever.

There can't just be this old attitude of, "Well, too bad you went through it. Take a week off and then come back." That is not sufficient. It is basically saying that you can heal yourself. As we all know, if you have a broken arm or leg, people see those accidents and they say, "Well, too bad. Take some time off. We'll put a cast

on it," whatever. But the things you can't see are the mental traumas that people go through. Therefore, because we can't see it physically, that police officer or firefighter or EMS person may look healthy and strong, but inside their being, they are going through a living hell because of what they have witnessed on the job.

It's therefore sometimes very difficult for people to take this as seriously as we should. So this is like a wake-up call for all of us—not only those dealing with the first responders, but for anybody dealing with situations in the workplace or in our families or in society—that if someone undergoes some kind of traumatic experience, we need to make sure they get the counselling and support and, if need be, the time off from work and the compensation they may need so that they can recover and get the help they need. They can't do it by themselves, and the families cannot do it by themselves.

That's what this legislation tries to do. It tries to say that this is something that the government steps up to do and that it's best practices that many others should follow.

I know when I was listening to Minister Flynn—and I heard him last week. It's interesting. I've also been working on a private member's bill that became law—Bill 141, the pregnancy and infant loss legislation—and I've been getting calls from some women who lost their babies at eight months in stillbirth or right at birth at nine months. In many cases, they went through post-traumatic stress disorder.

After they have delivered a stillborn baby, they are told that their maternity leave or their maternity benefits are cut off. They are told, "Go back to work," after delivering a stillborn baby. That's an example of the lack of sensitivity there is for people who go through trauma. Here's a mother who has been carrying a baby for nine months, and normally, if you deliver a healthy baby, you get all the support you want. You get your time off with maternal leave etc. But if you're unfortunate enough and you go through this incredible trauma of losing a baby, you're expected to go to work the next week with no maternity benefits whatsoever. So you can imagine the mental anguish that mother has gone through delivering a stillborn baby. You get no support; there's nothing out there. The employer or the government does nothing to support a woman who has gone through this trauma.

I refer to this, Mr. Speaker, because it's typical of what can happen to someone who silently goes through a trauma as a first responder. You just think that you can go back to work, that there's something out there, that your workplace will take care of it. But there isn't. They have to, basically, fight to get the proper compensation, proper health support. There are laws out there, but the laws do not adequately protect our firefighters, our EMS people, our correctional officers who are exposed to this kind of trauma 24/7.

In my part of the province, in the middle of the city, in Eglinton–Lawrence, I deal very closely with the men and women at three police divisions: 53, 32 and 13. Just hearing about some of the stuff that they have seen and go through would really upset any of us. They go through

this trauma on a regular basis. People getting their head totally blown off with a shotgun—it's not unusual; it happens. Imagine that you're a police officer or an EMS person and you walk into a scene and a person's head has been shot off. This happens in the streets of Toronto on a regular basis. These stabbings, shootings, beatings that take place, people getting beaten to death—there was a person a couple of years ago who got beaten to death with a baseball bat on a street corner. Who comes to the scene? The police officers, the firefighters and the EMS come. All three of them usually show up. Imagine showing up at the scene of a person who has just been beaten to death with a baseball bat and then you've got to go back to work after you've witnessed that horrible thing. What does that do to your psyche? What does it do to your mental health when you witness these kinds of things—horrible, horrible things that we don't have to see as ordinary citizens, but our police officers, firefighters, EMS personnel and correctional officers do, as their regular duty. And they do it not just once in a while; in some cases, they could go through more than one of these traumatic experiences. Sometimes, as I said before, this brings the strongest of men, the strongest of women down to their knees and they can't get up again.

That's why we need this kind of legislation which recognizes that this type of trauma can incapacitate someone. Once they report this kind of trauma, they shouldn't be forced to go through this inquiry, this inquisition, by the WSIB or by an employer, of whether or not they really mean it or they're trying to beat the system. Sadly, there has been too much of that. Everybody who came forward, in many cases, had no confidence that they could report these cases and get the support they needed. I talked to a number of firefighters who would tell me, "I didn't bother reporting it, because if I reported it, I'd have to go through that incredible ordeal, and then I didn't know what the reception would be from my fellow workers. I just didn't want to report it, so I just held it inside and carried that, day in, day out." It ate away at them.

Then you wonder why some of our front-line people—you hear about these suicides. I think this weekend there was a special service for Canadian Armed Forces personnel who committed suicide. They come back from Afghanistan, or they come back from Iraq, or wherever—or like Roméo Dallaire, back from Africa. You can imagine all our Canadian personnel who were in Rwanda or Africa, what they saw, what took place in Africa, where there was mass genocide, a slaughter of people with machetes, with everything under the sun. Hundreds of thousands of people were slaughtered, and our soldiers were expected to stand by and be okay after they witnessed these horrendous atrocities that took place in Africa when Roméo Dallaire was there. Now they're finally starting to recognize that when that service personnel comes back, the soldier comes back from duty, you'd better make sure they have the support they need.

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I know we had a case, just not far from where I live, where a soldier who served for eight years in Afghanistan

jumped off a balcony with his wife—both of them dead. The family thought that he showed signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. Here's a soldier—I think he was 37 years of age—and something happened to him when he was in Afghanistan. Who knows what it was? So he comes back, married, expecting a child, and then all of a sudden the two of them ended up—the circumstances are still a bit of a mystery, but both jumping off or being pushed off a balcony, and both dead—a 38-year-old soldier.

How many other soldiers have committed suicide? How many other first responders have gone through all kinds of marriage breakups, all kinds of family dysfunctionality, because of the fact they didn't get help at work when they witnessed these horrific, traumatic situations?

This bill tries to deal with that reality. I think it's a very effective, comprehensive bill. It had input right across the board and hopefully it'll change the paradigm on this whole thing about mental health and trauma and how our first responders are treated once they go through this kind of awful trauma in the workplace.

That's what this bill tries to do. As I said, my hope is that people across Ontario will start to recognize that this kind of illness—it may not be visible, but it is definitely something that can incapacitate someone—is taken seriously and that we support these people. We support our family members. We support our neighbours, friends, and our personnel who work in these very precarious fields. We support them. And not to think that it's something that just happens to them. This can happen to any one of our families, any member of our families, their friends or neighbours.

For too long, this kind of impact was, again, hidden. I had the experience of visiting a friend in a psychiatric ward of a hospital. This man was an incredibly powerful, vibrant man, but he got hit by depression. Depression hits you like between the eyes and it puts you right on your back. This was a man who was very productive—family, friends—then all of a sudden he gets hit by depression.

How do you bring someone out of depression? There's no pill; there's no operation; there's no quick fix. It's related to the same type of thing that can happen to a first responder. If you get hit by this depression, or whatever you want to call it, after being part of a traumatic situation, there ain't no magic solution. You just need to have incredible sensitivity, support, from your fellow workers, your employer, your government, and from all of us who have to pay attention to this and try to be helpful in ensuring that everyone we talk to takes mental illness, this kind of trauma, seriously. It's something that is in every part of Ontario. Whether you're in Kenora, Cornwall or down in Hamilton, it happens everywhere. It doesn't matter if you're black, yellow, green, whatever nationality you are; it happens to anybody. So it's not just an isolated thing that happens to them.

It's got no age limit to it either. This kind of impact—whether you're a 21-year-old or whether you're a 61-year-old, this trauma can, again, incapacitate anybody.

Age is no insurance. You might see a young, healthy firefighter, and he or she looks like an incredible example of good health and physical fitness. They're very strong and they're very fit, as most of our first responders are, but that doesn't mean you're immune from this kind of anguish that besets people who undergo trauma. Don't just think, "Well, they're young. You're okay; you'll get over it." A 25-year-old goes through this, and they say, "Oh, you're a young police officer, don't worry about it." No, it basically—age has got nothing to do with it. Basically, nobody is immune from this happening to them.

In conclusion, I just want to say that I think this kind of legislation is something that will help not only our first responders who asked for it—they've led the fight for this—but will help society overall, because I think it's part of the total shift in attitude towards these things that we call depression, mental anguish, mental disorders, and also trauma that happens in workplaces. We've got to have this shift—this will help—and we've got to continue to look at preventive measures, we've got to continue to do the analysis and we've got to continue to encourage everyone to undertake best practices to avoid these things from happening in the first place.

Overall, we've got to make sure that when something does happen, they don't have to go on trial to get their benefits and get the support they need.

I want to thank all the members for listening to me, and I want to thank the minister and everyone who has been putting forth this cause—all the firefighters and police officers, our First Nations emergency response team, our ambulance services, our Canadian soldiers, who have really gone through hell with this issue for a number of years because of their service. I think it's something that we should try and do our best to make into a great piece of legislation, so that we can set a real great example for our very, very important men and women who serve this province on a 24/7 basis.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, a few comments. The presentation we just heard on Bill 163, the PTSD act—I know the minister made mention of the experience of World War I veterans, those who remain silent for the rest of their lives, in spite of being asked many, many times what went on. We think of that expression of that era, "shell shock," because they didn't talk about it; they probably did hide a lot.

I grew up on war stories. My father continues to tell stories about four years on the North Atlantic, on convoy duty. Maybe being Irish, he's a talker, and I think that would be his remedy. Many, as we heard recently, do not talk about some of the things that they have witnessed. I know that later my father did talk about the drownings and the death that he did witness. In contrast, there is the, I guess I would say, strong, silent type.

I had some training in this a number of years ago. We would set up employee assistance programs. Part of those joint union-management negotiations would be to include

not only alcohol, marital stress, legal stress, but the work we did with DND civilians to include post-traumatic stress, more of a co-operative addition to the employee assistance program. This has taken it much further, with legislation, tying it in more closely with WSIB. Whether that's a good thing or not, we shall see.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I guess this allows us to say the motto, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try and try again," because this is a number of times that this particular bill had been brought to the House by our colleague Cheri DiNovo, who brought this issue back in the—I believe it was in, let's see now, the 39th Parliament, second session, that she brought in Bill 11. Then she had to try it again, so in the 40th Parliament she came in in the first session and she brought in Bill 129. Then she did it again in the next Parliament and again in the next Parliament and here we are. This is to say that this has been a long time coming, but you have persevered, my dear colleague, and I want to say I think we all congratulate you for that. As New Democrats, we understood that this is an issue we need to move forward on.

I see we have our friends from the OPPA here, and I'm sure others are going to be here as well as we go through this particular process of debate.

I just want to say to the government across the way that I heard the minister say in debate, "Oh, we've got to do this in a hurry. I really hope we get this through quick." Where have you been for the past number of years? That's my question. If you think it needs to move at light speed—and I'm not suggesting here we're going to slow it down; quite to the contrary—it's a little bit rich for the government to come to us and to say, "Oh, we've got to move on this at breakneck speed." This has been an issue that's been before this House for a number of years. The member has tried, by introduction of bills—and in another case actually got one of the bills passed at second reading. The government decided not to act on it at the time. Finally, we're here today, thank God, but the government—we appreciate that you've done this. It's the right thing to do. We say to the government, "Good." But let's not try to crow too much about how quickly we're moving on this and to what degree the government has done this on its own. It has happened. Why? Because this member pushed it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Of course I'm pleased to be able to rise in support of Bill 163 and just make a few comments on the excellent remarks by our Minister of Labour and also our colleague the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. This is truly a very, very important issue. As a physician, I certainly recognize how harmful exposure to very, very traumatic events can be for our first responders, particularly those who are first on the scene and can witness truly horrific injuries to individuals.

I became aware of this issue in particular when I became responsible for land ambulance in York region,

in 2000, when land ambulance was downloaded to the municipal level. I was responsible for amalgamating some six ambulance services into York region EMS, and had it made very clear to me that the impact of PTSD was real.

Actually as the member for Haldimand–Norfolk made reference to, we ensured that our EAP program was involved for those who were able to acknowledge that they had an issue with post-traumatic stress disorder, because as we heard, this is something where there's a great deal of stigma: First responders—police, fire, EMS—are supposed to be the strong ones. With the repetitive nature of seeing traumatic events, the impact can be extremely, extremely stressful for individuals. So we instituted, apart from the formal EAP process, a buddy system where a paramedic would have the opportunity to talk to someone individually and work things through.

This is an important bill and I urge everyone to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to rise to offer a few comments to the members opposite concerning Bill 163. I think there were some important points raised when I listened to the Minister of Labour; certainly, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. One of the ones I picked up mostly was that when somebody is identified to have PTSD, immediate treatment is needed when it's identified. Letting it linger is just like a wound that will fester unless it's treated, and certainly we need to work to identify the symptoms and identify how we can treat those symptoms to help the person who has it.

Public perception is something that needs to be addressed. It has been pointed out by different members in the House today. We deem that first responders are going to be strong. They can be strong physically and but also strong mentally, so they are able to go to places of stress and not be affected by them and bringing them to PTSD. So I think we need to have the public perception of this issue identified and understood more than what it is right now.

I would also hope that when this gets put through to committee, we have constructive discussion at committee and that any amendments that are put forward are thoughtfully put forward and thoughtfully debated at committee so that all parties who support this bill will have a meaningful discussion on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Eglinton–Lawrence can reply.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank the members from Haldimand–Norfolk and Timmins–James Bay, the Minister of Community and Social Services, and the member from Perth–Wellington for joining in with their comments.

I just want to say that this is a bill that is based on a lot of input, discussion and debate by many, many partners, because this will affect people in every municipality, in

every city and in all these workplaces. There's a lot of complexity in terms of the impact of this bill. That's why I think the minister has done a very thorough job in putting this all together. Hopefully, when it goes to committee, there will be—I'm sure, as there always are—good additions and changes proposed to make sure that we get it right because this is going to, as I said, really be a challenging piece of legislation to bring about.

We can pass laws here, but then the implementation of the law, ensuring that the intent of the legislation is carried out, is a different story. That's why I think it's critical that the bill went through this extensive consultation and that it continue to go through consultation as we go through the committee process, so that we can really come up with a bill that ensures the intent of protecting our first responders who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder—getting them the support that they've been asking for and that they need, and that it's done in a way that works effectively, compassionately and to the benefit of the people that have to go through this disorder.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: Before I start, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to defer our lead for our party, if I could.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to defer the lead speech for the official opposition on the second reading of Bill 163. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Now they still have to listen to me, though, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to stand today and speak to Bill 163, the Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder), 2016. I'm pleased to support this legislation to recognize post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, as a workplace injury for Ontario's men and women who serve on the front line as first responders. The new act would create a presumption that a PTSD diagnosis is work-related, leading to faster access to resources and treatment.

It's important that people with mental health issues receive timely access to care. This includes our police officers, firefighters, paramedics, workers in correctional institutions and secure youth facilities, dispatchers of first responders, and our First Nations emergency response teams.

1500

As we understand it, presumption under the proposed bill applies to new claims, pending claims and appeals.

Pending appeals would be reconsidered under the presumption.

Previously denied claims would not be reconsidered under presumption.

Upon royal assent, a 24-month transition period before the legislation comes into effect ensures workers who are or were first responders during that time would have the opportunity to file a WSIB claim under presumption.

Going forward, if a worker who is a first responder leaves a position—for example, for retirement, termination or job change—they could bring a claim under presumption if they were diagnosed with PTSD within 24 months of leaving.

The Minister of Labour will have new power to direct broader public sector employers to provide information to support the prevention of PTSD in first responders.

The Minister of Labour will have authority to require employers of workers covered to provide the ministry with PTSD prevention plans.

PTSD involves clinically significant distress and impairment to functioning, and the development of certain types of symptoms following exposure to one or more traumatic events. They can include painful flashbacks, nightmares, outbursts, thoughts of suicide and feelings of worry, guilt or sadness.

Last year, 39 emergency workers and 12 military personnel in Canada died by suicide, according to the Tema Conter Memorial Trust, an organization that supports public safety and military personnel in Canada who are dealing with the serious and debilitating challenges of PTSD.

A constituent in my riding of Owen Sound, Dave Cruckshank, a firefighter, says that we have first responders locally who are suffering from PTSD. Dave was in a couple of years ago to see me in regard to this, encouraging me to support this legislation, and I'm proud to be able to say that I will be. Another constituent, Jill Foster of the "I've got your back 911" mental health awareness campaign, says this legislative change is "going to be life-changing for people. I think a lot of people can breathe a sigh of relief now that the government has taken these steps to actually recognize that people truly are suffering," she said, "We just hope it gets passed in a timely fashion."

Our leader, Patrick Brown, and our party have repeatedly called on the government to introduce policies and legislation to support first responders who are suffering from PTSD. In fact, our leader raised this issue with the Premier in his very first question period as leader of the official opposition. I'm pleased to see that Minister Flynn has actually brought this legislation forward. For years we heard from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, OPFFA, which lobbied to have post-traumatic stress disorder added to the list of presumptive illnesses within the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, WSIB.

Currently, Mr. Speaker, to qualify for WSIB payments because of PTSD, a first responder must prove they suffered the trauma on the job. These are only a few of the 73,000 first responders in Ontario, including police officers, firefighters and paramedics, and every one of them puts themselves in harm's way every day. We're doing this for them and for their families.

First responders experience PTSD at two times the rate of the general population, and statistics show us that up to 22% of paramedics will suffer from PTSD; that's almost one in four, higher than the average, as they say,

of anyone else in our population. According to the 2012 Ombudsman report, PTSD results in more suicide attempts than all other anxiety disorders. We've heard about the human and economic impacts associated with traumatic stress, from increased absenteeism to health deterioration, marriage and family breakdown, and, sadly, even suicide.

The important thing to remember is that PTSD can be prevented or mitigated with the right supports and treatments, and I think it's critical that the timely access—a few weeks ago I actually did some interviews in regard to mental health on campuses. It's a little bit different from the PTSD here, but the same thing there: It needs to have timely access. The ability to have someone help you when you reach out looking for help—it's absolutely critical that they have that access immediately. That's why we are pleased that the government has finally decided to introduce legislation to ensure that those who are diagnosed with PTSD get quick access to treatment and other supports through the WSIB.

The public awareness campaign was also boosted by the member from Parkdale-High Park, Cheri DiNovo, whom I want to recognize for pioneering this issue at Queen's Park. For years she pushed for better access and treatment on behalf of first responders suffering from PTSD. We thank her for that.

Former local police sergeant Bill Rusk in my riding, and current executive director for Badge of Life, was the first one who approached me, shortly after I was elected in 2011, to talk about presumptive coverage for PTSD and police personnel. His story: In 1990, while involved in a criminal drug investigation, Bill was a victim of gunshot wounds to the face, neck, shoulder, back and right hand that have left him with lifelong alterations to his physical and mental well-being. In less than five months' time, Bill had returned to work as a front-line police officer, determined to continue with the profession that he loves.

However, in 1993 Bill was diagnosed with severe chronic PTSD while receiving little to no assistance in his journey back into the policing environment. By 1995, Bill's personal life was met with divorce and loss of regular contact with his two children due to geographic restraints. In 1998, Bill remarried his wife, Lynne, and now has two additional children.

Between 2008 and 2014, Bill took on additional responsibilities by serving as a director of the Police Association of Ontario, PAO, where he represented all 33,000 police personnel across the entire province and started to actively advocate for compensation for mental stress. He told me that, currently, a significant number of PTSD claims by police personnel are initially denied by the WSIB but are eventually accepted at appeal. I know that he supports Bill 163 and looks forward to continuing the important work of fighting and eliminating the stigma related to PTSD.

I want to publicly thank Bill for not only making me aware but being a champion and continuing to push on behalf of those members of our society who deserve this

type of care and support in their time of need, Mr. Speaker.

Back to Ms. DiNovo: Her last effort came by way of Bill 2, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), which she introduced in July 2014. She definitely deserves recognition for increasing awareness around this very real disorder.

A survey that I recently read showed that mental health issues account for the majority of doctor's visits in Canada—including depression, stress, and anxiety disorders. In fact, 63% of physicians surveyed reported that depression was now a top reason for visits. Mr. Speaker, this is a significant finding—not shocking to those men and women who are suffering from PTSD, but certainly, I think, from our perspective as legislators and the general public, to be aware of just how significant this is and how it has become that top trend. It's significant because we know that this government is not responding to these needs as expediently as it should. That's why we're pushing for this legislation to be enacted as quickly as possible.

For example, consider these statistics on access to mental health services in Ontario: More students than ever are arriving on campus already having experienced mental health problems, yet the average wait time to access mental health services on campus in Ontario is three months. As I shared with you, when I had those discussions with the students, what we all understand and know—although fortunately I've never had any of those severe challenges—is that when someone actually has the conviction to step up and ask for help, the last thing they want to hear is, “We'll get back to you in three months.” Three months is a long time if you have those types of challenges, if you have that stress and that anxiety, to even know that someone is going to assess you in three months—not necessarily help you, but just even do the initial assessment.

One of the things that was compelling to me was knowing how to access those services and how there are a number and variety of services across our province—but a better coordination so that when people are reaching out, they can do that. I encourage everyone here listening in the House and at home today: If you even have a sense of someone struggling with any kind of mental health challenge, reach your hand out across and show them that you're caring and you will do what you can to help them.

This Liberal government needs to do more to help create healthy campuses and healthy communities. Just last November, I reached out to the government for help when I found that a youth treatment centre in my riding was facing closure. Seven Bridges Treatment Centre was the only residential program in Grey-Bruce that served youth with addictions and mental health problems, but because of lack of funding, it was forced to close. This is shameful because this government knows that our region needs better mental health services. We need concrete action to address the growing needs of our people who are grappling with mental health issues.

We know, across the spectrum of mental health, the impacts that it has on our community: People not being able to work puts more stress on the family members; those family members then have more stressful situations, which, typically, end up with someone ending up at our hospitals in our emergency departments, which is our most costly form of health care, as you're well aware, Mr. Speaker. They have to take time off work, so now that company or that service that they're providing becomes less efficient and less able to generate income that, again, provides the jobs in our communities. So there's that ripple effect across.

I believe that our former member Christine Elliott and Sylvia Jones were on the committee that really went to bat and wanted to ensure that we had those types of coverage and brought mental health truly up in stature in regard to the significance of the challenges that we're facing, so that we are actually now addressing this. I believe that played a critical role in making sure that people were aware of just how much the need was, how much the challenge was.

1510

I think in my own community, it's one of those things we've always heard lots about: mental health. We've always heard that it's a challenge. We've always heard it's a concern across our province, across our country, across our society, but I think it's time that we put the resources there to actually start addressing it.

This legislation will be a step in that direction, I believe, giving timely access to people who need it, particularly our first responders, obviously because of the type of work they do. I can't fathom, although I've spoken to a number, both professional—in our case, in rural Ontario, we have a lot of volunteer firefighters. Whether you're being paid to do it or you're a volunteer, when you come across that type of situation, whether it be a small child or someone you know, that stark trauma—we have no idea unless you're that person who's there to understand just what type of an impact that will have.

For some of us, we might be able to deal with that without any resources and help, but many have to know that there are services there. It might not be immediate. It may be a little further after the time that that may come back to actually impact your life. We need to know that when people are picking those careers, they do it with a lot of thought and a lot of challenge. They do it because they're passionate. They want to make a difference that way in their lives. But I think they need to understand and be aware that there is that type of coverage available for them.

Again in Meaford, we have a military base. I hear from a lot of the officers there of similar things, particularly those who have gone into action overseas and have seen first-hand those concerns.

Just the other day, we lost a long-time war veteran, Mel Bartley. He was a friend of our family. I went to school with his daughter and know all of his children quite well. He was 96 years old. I forget his exact title,

but he rode the motorcycles in advance to make sure the messages were getting to the front line. They would go out in the dark, and it was kind of interesting when they did his eulogy that they were sharing that they actually turned the light off so that they would not be able to be recognized as quickly. So if you think about going out in the dark of night, knowing there could be snipers out there and risking your life to be able to get that message out there—and then to see some of the casualties, some of the other people he worked with who actually weren't as fortunate as him. His bike was hit a couple of times. Fortunately, he sustained minor injuries, but, again, that whole mental—just the anguish.

I was sitting there as I listened to the memorial of his life and the people sharing—think of getting on that motorcycle and going out into the darkness, knowing the enemy is out there and doesn't want you to get to your destination. You do it, you get back, and tomorrow night you're going to go out and do that all over again. I believe it was 90 missions that he did back and forth over his two or three years of service just on that one mission alone.

I sat there really in awe. I never knew all this when he was alive. This just came out after, sadly. I'm sure his family knew it, but the story was shared with all of us in attendance. I sat there thinking, "Wow. Could I have got on that motorcycle?" Then, of course, the little bit of humour that came out of it was: So you turn the light off, but I'm not certain how you wouldn't hear a motorcycle, if you think about it, back in the Second World War and how loud they were.

He was one of those people who came home and served his community very well. Obviously, I don't think it impacted him to the point that many of our first responders are. That's the significance of this bill: making sure that there is timely access for those people who need it after suffering some kind of a traumatic situation.

In November of last year, we had an Occupational Stress and PTSD Symposium in Port Elgin, in my colleague Lisa Thompson's riding of Huron-Bruce, where Dr. Lori Gray and Debbie Bodkin spoke. While I could not attend because of my commitment here at Queen's Park, I did hear from the first responders in our area about the importance of the awareness that we are raising.

Dr. Gray is a clinical, forensic and rehabilitation psychologist who has extensive experience in working with first responders and EMS in Canada. Ms. Bodkin served as a sergeant with the Waterloo Regional Police Service for 24 years. She herself suffered with PTSD and said that because of the stigma related to mental health injuries, she kept her condition secret and suffered in silence for many years.

Again, I hear that not just with PTSD but all across the mental health spectrum, that people are concerned. They don't want other people to know. That stigma is there, and I think the good news is that by us talking about it, by creating legislation, we're raising the awareness and

less and less is it a stigma. People are willing now to reach out, make people aware and to actually ask for help.

They also heard from Corey Walsh, a Durham Regional Police officer who was involved in the set-up of a mental health unit within the service and who has worked on a support and steering committee; and Dean Wilkinson, who started his career in emergency medical services over 40 years ago, including 18 years with the Owen Sound emergency services. He recently retired from his position as deputy chief of Essex-Windsor EMS.

There is no doubt that first responders deal with harsh realities every day, and they need Bill 163 so that they can get the help they need to deal with PTSD.

I would also like to recognize a first responder in my riding who has just announced his retirement after 17 years with the Crime Stoppers program in Grey-Bruce. Crime Stoppers certainly is—and I trust it is in all communities—that service where you can call in anonymously, and give tips about crime so that you can help others, even though you may not want to be directly involved. OPP constable Dean Rutherford, who has been the driving force behind Crime Stoppers of Grey-Bruce, will retire this Friday. Dean, I want to thank you for your dedication and successes over the years. In fact, last year was the best year on record for Crime Stoppers of Grey-Bruce with regard to the amount of tips coming in—again, a great community service. Who knows, Mr. Speaker, what may have been prevented as a result of those people? So a shout-out to Dean, and a shout-out to all people so that, again, if you view something that is a crime in your community, pick up the phone and call Crime Stoppers and do your part to make our society the best that it can be.

I would also like to take a moment and remind the members that it was exactly two years ago that our former member Frank Klees introduced the First Responders Day Act. His bill was passed unanimously, receiving second and third reading unanimously on December 10, and royal assent on December 12, to declare May 1 of every year as First Responders Day.

Today, with Bill 163, we continue to recognize the important work of the men and women who work on the front lines as first responders. We are forever indebted to you for the safety and security that we enjoy in our communities because of the work you do.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to cover a few key messages as my wrap-up to this, because I think it's important, after 20 minutes, to reinforce and reiterate that PTSD is a serious and debilitating condition. We support Ontario's first responders, and we believe we have a responsibility to ensure that they have access to the support that they need.

Our leader, Patrick Brown, and our PC caucus want to see this bill move forward without undue delay. Second reading debate will allow MPPs to express their support for first responders, and will ensure that the bill is properly drafted to achieve the objectives we all support for our first responders. Referring the bill to a standing

committee for clause-by-clause consideration will do nothing but strengthen the bill.

This legislation will provide faster access to resources and treatment for first responders. As I've said earlier, that timely access is the key. That person who actually encounters a situation where they need the help—it's absolutely critical that we don't give them that old "Well, we'll call you in three months." That's the worst thing I think we can do. They deserve our respect to get that timely access, and I think this bill is going to help us to get there.

We've been fortunate with our new leader, who I believe has a good relationship with first responders. It has certainly been because of his leadership—because of that positive and constructive relationship—that we stand here, very proud to be able to support this and to make sure that it gets to committee and that we do a clause-by-clause, so that it is effective legislation and that we're actually listening to the stakeholders. The people who are going to require this are who we need to be hearing from—the clinical experts, but more importantly, the first responders, who actually are in that situation and can tell us exactly what they believe is the best result for them to be able to get the timely care that they need.

Mr. Speaker, our first responders—and I don't want to forget any of them—our police officers, our firefighters, our paramedics, our workers in correctional institutions and youth facilities; the dispatchers of first responders, who are on the phone talking to them—they may not actually view it, but I can't accept that they are not impacted significantly when they are dealing with it on a communications basis—and, of course, our First Nations emergency response teams: We thank you for your service. We believe that you need the respect to have that timely service when you need it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to be able to respond to some of the comments made by the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

I would like to start by first having the opportunity to congratulate my colleague the member from Parkdale-High Park on the hard work that she and New Democrats have done, making sure that we push the government at every opportunity that we were given, to ensure that first responders were given the respect that they needed in the workplace.

1520

Acknowledging PTSD is an absolute necessity—and respect, really, for the job that they do. While we're all running out, they're the ones who are running in, and we need to make sure that we're taking care of them when they're doing so. This bill is important. It's necessary. I hope it's a first step to where PTSD diagnosis and presumptive legislation is going to be happening.

We know that there are many workers in this province who are maybe not the first responders, but they're front-line workers—as the child and youth critic, I can say children's aid workers and youth in care workers, making

sure that they have the legislation when it's needed. This is something that could be needed for any employee or worker in this province—ensuring that they get the fast pass also when they're suffering from PTSD. It's an awful disease, which we've seen hurt many individuals, regardless of where they work or what they've done in their lifetime. We need to ensure that the legislation is looked at each and every year to make sure that we are capturing everybody within the pool.

Again, congratulations to the member. And thank you to the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker. As you will know, not only do I serve as the parliamentary assistant to our leader, the Premier of Ontario, Kathleen Wynne, but also as a physician. In that capacity, I continue to see, diagnose and manage individuals not only with general anxiety disorders, mood disorders, mental disorders, but also with regard to PTSD. If I might, Speaker, with your permission, share some of the symptoms so that people might recognize it.

People will have difficulty with sleep, either falling asleep, staying asleep or having a restless sleep. They may awake with nightmares. They will lose interest in what previously used to engage their minds. They will have this kind of unremitting sense of guilt that if they had only done this or only done that, things might have been better. They might lose their energy, almost like a chronic fatigue-type syndrome. They tend to become very agitated and have a very short fuse. They feel like punching holes in walls or on nearby loved ones, if the case may be. They may even lose concentration. For example, people may drop out of any kind of program or school or upgrade with regard to their skill set. They lose their appetite very often. And they, unfortunately, as has been mentioned in this chamber, often think of meeting their creator.

All of these things are elements of major mood disorders. As a doctor, I know we tend to call them in that realm generalized anxiety disorders or, as it's labelled here, post-traumatic stress disorder. This deserves our attention, our support, talk therapy, occasionally drug therapy, if necessary. Sometimes we refer patients to group settings and in that they're able to share their stories and sometimes there seems to be a distribution of the burden of depression, and that seems to have a kind of salutary effect.

All of these are very important, and as we bring this bill forward, I hope the PTSD community will benefit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to offer a couple of comments from listening to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and his support for this bill.

I think that there are a couple of things that just need to be remembered. Certainly, as a political party, we've always been very sympathetic to the issues of mental

illness, being a part of the select committee that met and provided a map for the government in this area.

With post-traumatic stress disorder, one of the problems is always the degree to which one event may impact someone quite differently than others. That makes the whole process of identification difficult and challenging in some cases—I think most of us have seen, if not with first responders then with others who have witnessed events that have been a crucial watershed for them and their mental health.

I have a friend who is taking some professional support on post-traumatic stress from having been lucky enough to live, but very severely damaged, in a motorcycle accident, which really wasn't an accident. It was a drunk driver who killed her friend on a motorcycle and left her with permanent damage. It's very hard to feel very charitable because while she is undergoing professional therapy for this, this individual is out on the street. That seems to be another issue for another day, but it shows you the extent to which this kind of stress can take someone. It's beyond the first responders.

I think back years ago to a friend—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to stand and add my two cents and two minutes to this conversation on Bill 163, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 and the Ministry of Labour Act with respect to posttraumatic stress disorder.

I've been very busy over the intersession. I spent the intersession touring 15 jails and many of our probation and parole offices, as the critic for community safety and correctional services. As you can imagine, I learned a lot. I certainly appreciate that in this piece of legislation, we see that our first responders include all those, or many of whom should be included in this piece of legislation.

My very first tour was to the Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay. It happened to be on a day that there was a memorial for an officer who, sadly, had died by suicide. That really did set the tone for my understanding of just how dire the situation is and just how great the need is to support our first responders and our front-line workers, who are working across our communities in increasingly violent circumstances. Whether we're talking about our police, our fire, our paramedics, our correctional workers, whether we look at our children's aid workers, our Ministry of Labour inspectors, our nurses—workers across the province are faced with increasingly stressful and violent situations. I think, as we've heard from the Minister of Labour today, that we're learning more and more about PTSD and that there is going to be a need to incorporate research and all of that.

I think that we need to take that a step further and ensure that that informs which group can be brought into either this piece of legislation or the next piece, because there are so many who deserve and require that support, and I would challenge the government to provide it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound can respond.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you to my colleagues from Hamilton Mountain, Etobicoke North, York-Simcoe and Oshawa.

I think what we heard is there was a resounding collective of people that acknowledge that we need to respect our first responders, we need to provide that timely access and we need to expedite coverage to those most in need. I think that one of the questions that has come out in some of the discussions is, are there other occupations than what we've mentioned today? There definitely would be and could be, but I think the key was to focus on our first responders, who, every day, are in that line of concern and care, and put their lives out in an area where they could see something traumatic that's going to impact them. I think that's absolutely critical.

I think one of the other things that came out that I didn't cover in my notes earlier—the 2012 provincial Ombudsman's report and the 2015 Toronto Ombudsman's report on Toronto Paramedic Services also certainly requested and reported back that this was an area that we need to be taking action on, sooner than later.

One of the discussions that I had with people, those first responders, as we were looking at this bill was, again, that with physical impact, you can see that. You can see if someone loses an arm—there is some kind of a visual. You just accept it, that they've been hurt on the job and they're there. But something like a mental health disorder is not visible typically. Now, we did hear of some of the symptoms, and certainly you can see those at some point, I trust, or the physician would certainly be able to see that, but I think it's one of those challenges that when it's a mental disorder, or a mood disorder, it isn't something you can see. So, again, I think we have to look at and acknowledge that just because you can't see it, it doesn't mean it's not there. We hear the stories every day.

1530

I think it's absolutely critical that we do this, that we rewrite the legislation, say, in the clause-by-clause, to ensure that it truly is responding in a timely manner and providing the service they need. I'll certainly be supporting this as we go forward, Mr. Speaker, and encourage the government to enact it as quickly as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always an honour to rise, and particularly about this bill. It has been a long, long road. Seven years ago—actually, eight years ago is when it all started, when the first bill was tabled that I tabled. Then, as the member from Timmins-James Bay has said, four more bills came after that, including one second reading.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Want the list?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's okay—one second reading, and here we are. So, it has been a long time, and, sadly, a large number of deaths, too. In fact, in this year alone, there have been 10 suicides of first responders since January 1. Last year, there were over 30. This is an ongoing problem, and we're here collectively to talk about a potential solution.

I want to acknowledge a couple of people who have been sitting here very patiently: Bruce Chapman, who is the president of the PAO, and Chris Hoffman, who's the vice-president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association. I think they deserve a round of applause. They and their associations have been here, really, since the very beginning. The very first iteration of this bill was for all workers. That didn't get a lot of traction from across the aisle, so we tightened it up and we talked about those workers who are most affected—first responders—because, as you've heard the labour minister say, they experience post-traumatic stress disorder twice as often as other workers. That's why we started there. It doesn't mean we should end there, and I'm going to speak a little bit later about some of the amendments that we would like to see put forward. But for now, let's talk about the bill before us, Bill 163.

When I think about this bill, there are so many images that come to mind, but I'll start with the first one. The first image is of a young woman. Her name: Shannon Bertrand. Shannon was here on Thursday when the government announced its intention to finally act on this situation. Shannon came into our constituency office and was met by our constituency staff first before they brought her situation to my attention.

I know that many members here see a lot of people in their constituencies. In Great Britain, your constituency hours are called "surgeries," and I think we can ring with that because often a lot of those meetings can be pretty painful. There's not a lot we can do for a lot of folk, especially when we're not in government. We do our best. We fight for them, but often we have to let them go, saying, "That's life. There's not a lot of justice in the justice system," or, "Good luck with the Ministry of Health," or, "Good luck with the Ministry of Labour, trying to get something done."

This case was different. This case was different because it was so compelling. Shannon is a young paramedic. She's back at the job now, and that's a good thing. Her claim with the WSIB has gone on—is still going on, Mr. Speaker—for 10 years. She is proof positive that post-traumatic stress disorder does not need to be terminal. You can get treatment. You can get over it, even fighting against all the odds. Even without WSIB's assistance, you can get back to work. You can survive it, but what an ordeal.

When she came in, we thought, simply, what anybody would think: "This is wrong." There is something absolutely unethical and immoral and wrong about asking our first responders to run into danger, day after day after day, and when they come down with post-traumatic stress disorder, which is, after all, a disorder—it's mental but is like any other—we don't protect them. We don't treat them with dignity. We don't give them the coverage that they should get by right, because PTSD is a workplace injury. I'm going to repeat that often, because that's the simple truth that we're speaking about today. Post-traumatic stress disorder is a workplace injury. It comes about as a result of your work.

In the very same way, the very template for this bill was with firefighters. Remember back. Again, it was a bill we first introduced, from the New Democratic Party, that certain kinds of cancer should be covered for firefighters. A lot of firefighters can run into a Plastimet fire, into a chemical fire, and not all of them are going to run out with a cancer, but some of them are. To try to prove that you contracted cancer from one Plastimet fire or another is virtually impossible to do.

Now, just imagine, with post-traumatic stress disorder, you're already suffering from trauma, and then you're going to go before panels of bureaucrats to try to convince them that you got that post-traumatic stress disorder from one incident of trauma at one point, and not any of the other trauma that you've experienced in your life. Trust me: By the time you get to that point, there has been a lot of trauma if you're a first responder.

I've got the time to do it, and they deserve it, so I'm going to read the stories of our first responders who have sent them to us. We have stacks of such stories, I'm sad to say, from first responders all across this province, who reiterate time and time again how they tried to suck it up, how they tried to get on with the job, how they tried to just go back out there, and they just couldn't do it.

How does that manifest itself? Well, yes, it's a DSM category disorder. Yes, you need a psychiatrist or a psychologist finally to diagnose it. But it might manifest itself in any number of ways initially. A standard way is drinking too much.

My husband spent some time between high school and university working for the Waterloo Regional Police. They hired him because he could speak Portuguese—he's Portuguese—and he wanted to ride his motorcycle. It was a perfect job for after high school. He thought he wanted to be a cop. He thought he wanted to go through and become a detective, actually.

He went out there and, in his very brief time on the force, decided he wanted to go to university, because you had to, to be a detective. Then he got waylaid at university and ended up becoming an academic, God forbid. Anyway, he's now an academic. But for that year that he was on the force—and this is Waterloo Regional. This isn't 11 division, 14 division, 55 division in downtown Toronto. It's Waterloo Regional. He was on a bike. He wasn't a detective. He wasn't dealing with murders. He was dealing with traffic tickets. He said that in his department, there was about a 50% divorce rate, and there was a high rate of alcoholism. Now, think about it. I'm going to tell you about what some of our, yes, just traffic cops put up with, in a little while.

But there's an insight. I can tell you that although I'm a proud New Democrat and proudly on the left, you'll never, ever hear anything out of our household but esteem for our first responders—for our police, our paramedics, our firefighters, our dispatchers, and our corrections officers and parole and probation officers as well—because we know, in our household, what they do. I'll be telling you stories in a minute. Maybe I'll start with one of them.

Let's start with a situation that goes back many, many years. I was 12 years old. I had a nightmare, actually, leading up to this, because children are very sensitive and they pick up on things in adults. I picked up on something about my stepfather. He had served in the Second World War. He had actually been in one of the liberating forces for Auschwitz, so you can imagine what that was like. I remember the pictures that he had, the photographs. They were of nightmares that he encountered when he actually walked into Auschwitz.

At any rate, clearly, this was a man who had never dealt with post-traumatic stress disorder. There wasn't even a word for it back then, quite frankly. It was called shell shock, if it was called anything at all.

Anyway, I had a nightmare about his bedroom, where he slept. In my dream, I would walk up the stairs, I would get to the door, but I wouldn't go in. One morning, he didn't appear at breakfast. He was very military. He always was at breakfast at a certain hour. As a young girl, I remembered the dream. I walked up the stairs, I opened the door and discovered that he had shot himself through the head.

1540

I can tell you that then, having probably post-traumatic stress disorder myself as a teenager, I had a very tumultuous teenage period. Again: undiagnosed—not a word for it. We didn't have the diagnosis back then.

Let me tell you what happened after that. My cousin was an RCMP officer, and my cousin was called to the scene. He came in and dealt with it. Remember, this is somebody he knows, somebody in his family. He dealt with my mother and all the other relatives and the trauma and the hysteria and the upset and the suffering. My cousin did that. He was very young at the time; he was in his early 20s. I think back on him right now. Teddy Patrick, living in Georgetown, a shout-out to you. He's now retired. But he was the one who came.

I think of another traumatic period, in 1992. My husband at the time was coming home late from work. He worked in advertising. He was coming home on his bike, driving too fast. He hit the brakes too hard, and at about 3 o'clock in the morning, a young traffic officer came to my door. I was living in the Beach back then. Of course, you always know there's something wrong when the doorbell rings at 3 in the morning. She told me that my husband had died in a bike accident down there on Lake Shore.

Let me tell you about that traffic officer. That young woman held my family's hand, sat with us during the night, took me the next day to identify the body and was there throughout the entire process. I at that point was a clergyperson myself, in United Church ministry, and I can tell you that no clergyperson who crossed my path through that whole ordeal did as much for our family as that young traffic officer.

I think about her life. I think about what she does and did on a regular basis: to go to homes like mine, to knock on the door, to tell people that kind of news with small children in the house, over and over and over again—not

to mention what she's seeing on the road, what she's experiencing.

Tales of trauma—here are some others. They're not my words; they're this woman's:

"This story is about my friend Dave. He is kind, generous, and would go to the moon and back to help others, and yes he is also the quintessential advanced care paramedic. Or at least he was.

"In 2012, he received the Governor General's Emergency Medical Services Exemplary Service Medal. You can get a feel for the kind of remarkable human Dave is through this media announcement....

"Move ahead to 2014. Another assault on the job at a call, resulted in Dave attempting suicide, twice. Fortunately Dave is much better at saving the lives of others than taking his own. Outpatient mental health support followed by a two-month in-patient program, and then more out-patient therapy, Dave tried to return to the front line in 2015. It did not last long, and another incident at work sent Dave on leave again. His employer didn't help to support Dave through this process; Dave did all the work himself with lots of help from friends and family. In December of 2015 his employer terminated his employment.

"How does one go from receiving a Governor General service medal to terminated employment in a period of three years? Dave's WSIB claim for PTSD was denied ... his attempt to return to another in-patient mental health program was denied, as his benefits did not cover the next program that was recommended for him, and with diminished income while he was still employed receiving long-term disability, this program was out of his financial reach. This has all left Dave with a great deal of uncertainty, a lost career and denied rights that he is desperately fighting for. Is this," she says, "the way we treat those among us who choose a calling that comes with such personal risk, people who put their own well-being below the desire to help others and to save lives?"

One of the things that I hear about quite often from folk is, "Why did it take so long? What was the push-back? This was such a no-brainer. Why didn't the government do this? Why didn't we get action on this sooner?"

When travelling the province, when talking to people, first responders and others, who were supportive of the bill, the only explanations that I could hear talked to—first of all, the stigma; that people didn't really believe that a mental health disorder was really a disorder like any others. Then the second one, which was much more sketchy, it seems to me—if there can be such a thing—was people who thought that first responders might fake it if they had this presumptive diagnosis, if they got to claim this was a workplace injury, and that then would cost the system more money.

Mr. Speaker, people don't often verbalize that, but that's, in essence, what people were saying to me. That's why I'm reading these stories. That's why I'm telling you these stories: because I think we can enter into a little bit of the life of a first responder and forever put the lie to that kind of response.

In terms of money—because, sadly, it always comes down to money—Alberta, which has had this legislation on the books since 2012, is a perfect case in progress of a place that has presumptive legislation, that has declared this a workplace injury and it hasn't cost any more. In fact, if anything, because PTSD is a treatable disease—hey, I'm standing here, aren't I; and others, too—you can get back to work. If you're treated with dignity and given the help you need and if the money is there and the coverage is there, you can get back to work. You can get over it.

By the way, you're going to pay for it anyway, because if you don't get WSIB coverage, guess what happens? You end up—like the man in the story—on the Ontario Disability Support Program. So the government is going to pay for it, the people are going to pay for this one way or the other; the only question is whether with dignity or not.

Here's another one. This is in his own words:

"For 7,300 days, I responded to hundreds of 911 emergencies: delivering babies, rescuing victims of vehicle collisions, responding to factory and farming accidents, resuscitating vital-signs-absent patients from cardiac arrests, chokings and drownings.

"There were bloody traumas from bullets, blades, bludgeoning, bottles and bias; too many suicides and soiled, stained lives from drugs, alcohol, prostitution.

"In 1998, I faced a deranged soul with a 12-inch butcher knife. I should have died that day.

"I cared for a human angel, a double lung recipient, whose tiny adolescent body rejected her gifts of life. She refused her second chance of life because her friends at SickKids were waiting for their first chance. She died soon after, not because she gave up, but because she wanted another child to experience hope and the fresh air of a new day. Her final wish was not for herself, but for the kids she left behind: video games and controllers for those still strong enough to play life's game.

"The media spread the word and her wish was fulfilled. SickKids was inundated with electronics, the ward was furnished and her last wish granted daydreams to her friends that she left behind. I tried several times to pay my respects the day of her funeral, but each time my radio blared another 911 call and I never got to say goodbye.

"I cared for a young woman trapped in a burning car, her residual effects of horror from a head-on with a DUI pickup truck, all but her face, her big blue eyes and blond hair was left untouched; the rest of her youthful life was burned beyond recognition, turned charcoal and twisted sinew and visible porcelain white: hips, femur, tibia and foot now skeletal bone.

1550

"We talked about her life, her love for a man soon to be wed and she told me of her pregnancy that was now a hollowed, gaping wound, and finally, before we placed a breathing tube gently beyond her vocal cords and into her lungs, she shared with me a phone number to a wayward, neglectful mother. I called her last request and found out

why this woman was absent most of the young woman's life. Vile tone and talk greeted my ears as we sped with her dying daughter. This estranged mother would soon see her warped body, and this woman would wonder, with shocked eyes and gaping mouth, what unheard message from daughter to mother was left unsaid. 'She just wanted to say goodbye to you,' I whispered, and screamed within my brain.

"That night, the trauma tables in ER were full of broken bodies from the DUI, and each life we attempted to save that horrific night died, one by one, all except the DUI. And then one night, something broke." No kidding.

Another story I was thinking of when I came in today was an ancient Greek myth about Achilles. We all sort of know it. His mother was a goddess, Thetis, and she wanted her son to be immortal. She didn't want Achilles to ever die. She took Achilles and held him by his heel and dipped him into the river Styx, to give him immortal life. When she pulled him out, there he was: Achilles, the hero that we've all heard of in Greek myth. And he was a hero. He led troops in to fight Greece. He was universally acclaimed, thinking he was immortal. But he forgot one thing: She held him by his heel. There was a flaw. Guess where the arrow landed on Achilles that took him down? His heel.

It made me think of the Tema Conter trust and all those good people. Heroes are human too. There isn't a hero without a human flaw. There isn't a hero out there who is so strong that they can withstand everything and anything without being hurt in some way. That person does not exist. It is our duty as legislators, and it is our duty as those people who pass laws, to make sure that they are all taken care of when that flaw, whether it be physical or mental, whether it be cancer or post-traumatic stress disorder or a broken leg or a broken back, happens. That's our responsibility.

Okay, another one: It's a firefighter this time. This was sent to us, by the way, by MPP Michael Harris.

"Andy Cunningham still recalls every detail of the day 20 years ago when he came across an infant who drowned in his parents' tub: the Toronto address, the time of day, the little boy's name.

"Decades later, the veteran firefighter is still haunted by the ghosts of his work.

"As my depression grew worse, I started to have nightmares, flashbacks. I call them my ghosts. It was all the bad calls that I had run that I had never thought about for years and years. I'd never given them a second thought, and here they were, intruding into my life,' Cunningham said.

"Cunningham was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder during the last few months of 2012, after years of struggling to focus or even make it in to work on time.

"But the symptoms of PTSD, which can range"—as we've heard—"from depression to flashbacks, may not appear right away or be caused by a single incident. In Cunningham's case, it was almost 20 years before he sought treatment.

"His symptoms included flashbacks to a specific moment of a call, or endlessly second-guessing decisions he made on the job.

"Eventually, his supervisor noticed and asked if he needed help. Cunningham reluctantly accepted.

"I was scared," he says, "of what people would think. I was scared of appearing weak. I know that mental illness is not a sign of weakness, but there is still an old prejudice from when I was brought up that, you know, people who are crazy get locked up."

He spent two months in Homewood Health Centre, a treatment facility in Guelph that specializes in mental illness and substance abuse treatment. He says, "During my time in treatment, I met a lot of first responders and military people and even people from all walks of life who are being treated for PTSD, and they all said the same thing: that asking for help is the hardest part."

That's a telling story because the minister was talking about prevention and all that we need to do, and it's true. But one of the pieces of the bill that needs some amendment is that 24-month provision, because I really think that what we have to look at here is a longer time frame so that people—right now, people we know, cases in my office, who were denied by WSIB but certainly need that coverage, need to be able to go back in, need to be able to table the requests. They need help too. We need to look at that 24-month period, and I think we need to look at it seriously when we go through the chapter and verse of this law. Mr. Cunningham's story really brings that home.

Here's story of another firefighter, as well:

"My husband, Tony, has been a Hamilton firefighter for 30 years. It was a job he loved and one he was cut out to do. He had many 'close calls': having all his hair burned off, caught in flashovers and electrocuted.... But in February 2002, something happened that would change our lives forever. His station was called to an apartment building at 181 Jackson St. in Hamilton. While Tony was on the main floor, the two-inch concrete ceiling collapsed on him and he was buried. After some time, he was found by his brave co-workers. I got a call in the middle of the night, telling me there had been an accident and I was to go to the hospital. It seemed like a nightmare. At the hospital, Tony had visible physical injuries. Little did we know other injuries, not visible, were soon to follow. Over the next couple of days, I did notice a change in Tony. His moods, drinking ... things just out of character. He noticed this himself and called our family doctor, Laura Blew. She immediately knew Tony suffered from PTSD. She referred him to a local mental health clinic." She "notified the city, as well as WSIB, that Tony had PTSD. WSIB acknowledged his claim for PTSD, but no help was offered. So Tony faithfully went to see the therapist at the clinic even though they are not specially trained to handle PTSD victims. He returned to work.

"The next couple of years were years of taking different drugs to try to help with the disorder. Some worked. Some did not. Our children in this time were in

their early teens. Tony's mood swings, mainly because of the different drugs, disrupted our family and certainly affected our kids. Two years ago, Tony's PTSD had seemed to become worse and we separated. During his period from home, he was almost out of control. Speaking to our doctor, this type of behaviour is typical of PTSD. What did not help was the fact Tony was involved in a car accident where he was trapped and [this] further aggravated his disorder. We have since got back together and the kids and I support Tony 100%"—one of the lucky ones in that regard. "We can only guess how hard it is to have this awful disorder. Tony was taken off of work by the doctors, but his claim was not accepted by WSIB for almost two years." So, another story.

A couple more, but before I go into them, I want to say some thanks because thanks are in order. I want to say some thanks and I'm going to read off the organizations. It's amazing. When you have an hour, you think you have lots of time, and I'm running out of it. So I want to make sure that these names get into the record.

You've already heard that the Ontario Provincial Police Association is here. The Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, Police Association of Ontario, Ontario Paramedic Association, Tema Conter Memorial Trust, OPSEU, Unifor, CUPE, Civic Institute of Professional Personnel, and ATU—all have been very seminal in terms of supporting all the iterations of this bill, and finally, this bill itself.

1600

Let's talk about Bruce Kruger. He was an OPP officer. By the way, these were all the stories sent where they said, "Please use our real names. Please tell our real stories." We've got boxes of stories where they're not comfortable sharing their real names and their real stories—boxes. So when you talk about the numbers and when you see the suicides—which, of course, is just the tip of that ugly iceberg of what happens to those who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder for first responders—you know you're speaking, when you're speaking about this bill, to thousands out there.

Bruce Kruger—he was here, by the way, for second reading, so a shout-out to him; he was also here on Thursday when the government brought in this bill—"insists on having the perfect seat.

"He's fled airplanes, cried in restaurants and rearranged furniture at friends' homes—all for the perfect seat.

"That seat is backed against a wall.

"So no one can attack him from behind.

"Most of the time, the retired OPP officer appears to be enjoying an idyllic retirement.

"He has four grown children and 11 grandchildren with Lynn, his wife of 43 years. He has a charming home/bed and breakfast on the banks of the Muskoka River.

He also "runs two joint Swiss Chalet-Harvey's franchises, one in Bracebridge and Huntsville. He's the official town crier of Bracebridge.

"He seems successful and 'normal' in most every way.

"But 'it's a mask,' says Kruger ... who calls himself 'the great pretender.'

"Kruger has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder connected with his 29-year OPP career. He suffers from anxiety, depression, guilt and periods of rage."

He traces back his PTSD to the violence he experienced, which includes shooting and killing a prison escapee who was pointing a shotgun at his partner in 1977; finding slain OPP officer Rick Verdecchia frozen solid in a snowbank with three bullet holes between his eyes in 1978—Kruger, by the way, stayed with that body for several hours to protect the scene; and coming upon the bodies of a father and his six-year-old son who had drowned in 1978 and having to row the bodies back to the shore of Healey Lake.

"Before retiring in 1999, at the age of 51, he had witnessed countless other horrors ... gruesome accidents, sexual assaults and suicides, some involving children.

"He's now on two medications, an antidepressant and a blood pressure drug that stops the vivid nightmares that used to leave him screaming and panting.

"The nightmares were mostly fictitious gunfights," Kruger says, "and I'd be right in the middle of it."

"Occasionally he has appointments with a Toronto psychiatrist.

"Because he can freeze up in certain situations, Kruger carries a card in his wallet notifying people that he suffers from PTSD and might 'need a moment to settle.'

"In police work," says Dr. Randall Boddam, "these are guys who are exposed to life-threatening stressors as part of their job." This doctor was a senior psychiatrist for the Canadian Armed Forces from 1996 to 2010, and now he works with police officers as well as veterans.

"I've heard police say, 'When I pull a car over, I don't know what I'm going to be getting into.' That's anxiety-provoking in itself."

Anna Baranowsky, a clinical psychologist who works with police officers in private practice, says that police officers make up 10% to 15% of her client base. She says the key is to catch the disorder early. We've heard about that.

So that's Kruger. Suffice it to say that he's well enough to have shown up here to see what all his hard work has come to and what all his honesty has come to. Imagine having to live with that and having to speak about it all the time.

I didn't mention this, of course, and this is seminal: The reason that Officer Kruger has to sit with his back against a wall is that his fellow OPP officer Tom Coffin was murdered in 1997. "The killer came from behind and shot Coffin in the head at close range while Coffin was off-duty at the Commodore Hotel in Penetanguishene. The shooter had been charged with impaired driving by Coffin in April 1996." That's why Officer Kruger, now retired, has to sit with his back against a wall.

I'm going to go back actually to one that I didn't read, because they're not all like that. I'll look for it in a minute.

Tomorrow afternoon, I'm meeting with the widow of Darius Garda, the Toronto police officer who recently took his own life. I think we are all aware of the front page of the Toronto Star that told his story. It's a particularly awful one because he's so young: 29 years old. Again, he didn't get the treatment he needed.

As people would describe him, he was the ultimate good guy:

"He was very kind, very soft-spoken," recalled Catarina Martins, who was a fitness instructor with the police service during the early years of Garda's career. 'Physical fitness-wise, he was one of the strongest,' she added. 'A hard worker.'

"In April 2010, Garda was involved in an incident that seems to have left a profound mark on him. He was among a group of officers who pursued an erratic driver down to the Port Lands—near where Garda's body was found in the water Thursday—and cornered him. After the driver clipped an officer with his car, police opened fire and shot 32 rounds....

"The driver, a 50-year-old father of two ... was killed. It was later revealed that he had been on medication for schizophrenia.

"Garda testified at the inquest into Duda's death." That was the victim.

"I never saw, in my career, a police officer cry on the stand. But he did cry, and it was genuine'....

"He really felt something wrong had happened, that a man lost his life.... This police officer, he was looking at things through the perspective of a human being. The whole courtroom stopped for a bit.... We stopped and said, 'Wow.'"" That was the defence lawyer speaking.

"A wonderful son, brother, uncle and friend," who took his own life.

Here's a happy story: "On December 3, 2006 a woman had thrown her two-year-old"—happy in context—"off the Morningside bridge at the 401. Shortly after throwing her two-year-old off the bridge, this woman, after fighting with bystanders, had successfully thrown herself over the Morningside bridge onto the 401.

"I was the very first paramedic to the two-year-old. I was the second first responder to this child, as the first responder was a fireman who I found kneeling beside the child as he hung onto life, slowly dying. I never found out what happened to that fireman.

"I did not have to fight with WSIB in having my claim accepted, as part of PTSD. My supervisor immediately filed a WSIB report, and I was allowed, by WSIB to have a leave from work, I was allowed to be off on stress leave. I sought," and received, "psychological counselling thanks to WSIB, and with a couple of weeks of therapy, from both professionals, family and friends, I successfully returned to work."

That's how it should work, and that's what this bill and all of those years of trying will result in, we all hope here: that kind of story, that kind of treatment, with presumptive legislation.

I have a few minutes where I want to talk—and I'm sorry that the labour minister isn't in the room, but I

know he'll hear about it—about workers' rights generally in the province of Ontario. Because this is part of that, and first responders, at the end of the day, are part of the general workforce of this province.

1610

In a sense, they're the lucky ones, because they have associations. They have unions that fight for them, that come here and lobby for them, that have their best interests at heart. But, you know, about two out of every three workers in this province don't have an association or a union that goes to bat for them. One of the things that we're really charged with in terms of looking after workplace safety and workers' health—this is a piece of it; it's a big piece of it, and I'm glad—is to look after the other two thirds of the workers who don't have someone to fight for them, to help them get that body to fight for them.

What am I talking about? I'm talking about the kinds of things that we as New Democrats have fought for for so long: anti-scab legislation, card check certification. We know that wherever there are high rates of unionization, there are higher rates of safety on the job. We need to be always looking beyond those workers who have the ability to come and lobby us to all those other workers.

I can tell you the situation right now in Ontario is grim. About 50% of the workers in this province are precarious, temporary, contract. Those wonderful articles that the Star has been putting out on a drumbeat basis about precarious work and about temporary work and about contract work point out how dangerous that work is and how little coverage they have even to be able to collect their wages. Those are the other stories we also hear in our constituency office. We hear stories from them, particularly from racialized communities, new immigrants, where they don't know their rights and where they are not being paid to work. People are working for free, or they are called contractors and then they're not paid.

The reason I mention this: I have the opportunity to do so; this is a Ministry of Labour bill. But there was a landmark decision just recently for a couple who worked as "contractors" and who sued and won. So the courts are weighing in where this government fears to tread in looking after workers' rights generally across the province of Ontario. It's really important to highlight that as well.

Let's go back to the bill and talk about amendments, because there are some that I think need to be made.

It's interesting—and our paramedics pointed this out. I want to assure them that, even though in the bill—we had a technical briefing this morning; I want to thank the ministry staff for doing that—it's not spelled out that part-time paramedics are covered, they are. It's spelled out that part-time firefighters are covered in this bill. Part-time paramedics are also covered. It's very important to note that because, again, with precarious employment, a lot of our paramedics in Ontario are working for several different employers and are working on a part-time basis. So I wanted to let them know we checked into that and that's covered.

But auxiliary police members, special constables—I was thinking about our own Sergeant-at-Arms here. I think he is ex-RCMP, but he's no longer RCMP. We think about the brave Sergeant-at-Arms on Parliament Hill who performs such a great duty for this country. He is a special constable. He may not be covered by the letter of this law. So I would appeal to the government when they're looking at amendments to look at special constables, special forces, and auxiliary forces as well. We need to make sure that those folks are covered too, particularly our own Dennis. After all, he puts up with us, so we want to help him. That was another thing.

Also, I've already mentioned the fact that this 24-month period is not nearly long enough. We really need to look at post-traumatic stress disorder. Because of the stigma that has been in place, it takes people a long time sometimes to come forward. Sometimes it's after they have left the force because they cannot work any longer. This would not necessarily cover all of them. I think, in light of some of the stories I've read out today, that is particularly tragic, because these really have been the gladiators who have fought for this bill. These are the ones who have brought their stories to my office, and I'm sure also to the Minister of Labour's office. We need to make sure that all of those claims are covered, that there is some grandparent clause here to some of those. I get that you can't cover everybody and you can't go back forever, but this bears some examination, and this bears some closer look. Again, that's an amendment that I would certainly want to look at.

You heard others speak in our own caucus about other front-line workers. One group of front-line workers that is covered by the bill—that didn't get a lot of mention today, by the way—are dispatchers. They are covered by the bill, just so they know. But 911 communications operators should also be covered. Sometimes the job title itself might exclude someone from the presumptive legislation. Again, I'm just putting it out there so that the government can look at this, so that we make sure nobody's left out, so that even if their job title is something slightly different, if they're doing the same nature of the work, they should be covered. That's really important.

Another group not in here are probation and parole officers. We were absolutely pleased that corrections officers were included. They have been lobbying us, as well as the government, for many years on this bill. I've always said to them, "Only the government can make this law." Now that the government is making it law, let's make sure that we include everyone that needs to be included.

I think it's important to look at, for example, some of our nursing staff that work on the front lines of their jobs too. The Manitoba legislation covers all workers. As I said, my original iteration did too. We're not even suggesting that. We're just suggesting that for first responders, wherever they work, whatever line they're in, if their job title excludes them, there is room for expansion on this bill.

Again, if the concern is cost—which is always the concern, when it's not spoken out loud—one can say

again, can reiterate again, that you're going to pay for those who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, one way or the other. You can either do it with dignity, or you can treat them badly and re-traumatize them, which is what has happened in the past. You're going to cover them. Whether it's on social assistance or whether it's through WSIB, they're going to cost you money. There is no question about that.

What haven't I done? I also want to thank—I really want to thank—the media on this. They have kept this issue alive on the front pages. For example, Constable Garda was on the front page. Their constant pressure has made this happen.

I do want to thank the Minister of Labour. I know he has gone to bat for this. I want to thank the leader of the Progressive Conservatives. I think his first question in the House was on this bill.

I want to thank especially, of course, our own leader, Andrea Horwath, who has been there since the beginning seven years ago, when I first tabled the bill, and has always been supportive of this.

I want to thank some people in my own community. I want to thank—he's now gone on to teach at the police college—Peter Lennox, who was the superintendent of 11 Division, who said to me, completely out of the blue, off the cuff, “You know, I would like the day to come when we recognize those who have fallen in the line of duty, and those who have also taken their own lives but who have been heroes.” That really stuck with me; that really stayed with me. It's a powerful message. I think that for firefighter, for paramedics, for police, for dispatchers, for corrections workers and others, we really need to keep that in mind. As Tema would say, heroes are human too, and there is no such thing as a hero without a flaw.

The Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions was mentioned, and I want to mention it too, because they did fantastic work on that committee. They travelled around the province, and they made, I think, some 23 recommendations out of that committee. Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry to say that only three have been acted upon—only three.

That's the broader scope of mental health and addictions. That's certainly the broader scope, but it's an important one, because unless we deal with the stigma of mental illness for everyone; unless we actually deal with this the way it is and not the way we pretend it should be; unless we get rid of the wait-lists for services—and trust me, all those folk who come here looking for services for their children who are suicidal, their children who have addiction issues, those folk shouldn't have to mortgage their homes to send them to private care, and that is the case for many of them right now in the province of Ontario. So there is a bigger picture here.

1620

The mental health and addictions committee did that hard work. Let's not let their report gather dust on a shelf; let's make sure the government acts on all those recommendations. That was many years ago. Again, I

want to thank everybody who was on that committee. I know our own member from Nickel Belt, France Gélinas, was. She, in particular, has been an advocate for that. Again, let's make sure that happens.

Of course, it goes without saying that all of the stakeholders who have been active and all of the other jurisdictions, Alberta and Manitoba—and by the way, some good news: Others are also looking at it. New Brunswick is looking at it; Nova Scotia is looking at it. I'm hoping that, because of the media around this in Ontario, all of the other provinces come on board with similar legislation.

This is a workplace injury, no matter where you perform that work. I think I've only trended on Twitter in Canada twice in my life and this was once, when this announcement was made. It was right cross Canada. Right across Canada we need action on this, not just in Ontario. Hopefully, others who are listening to this debate in other provinces will step up and act on this too.

What else to say? Finally, let me end with a story that happened actually within the last month. This time, I won't tell you the name for obvious reasons. I'm here at Queen's Park. The House isn't sitting. We're just in to have some meetings with some stakeholders and constituents. My executive assistant comes running in. She said, “We have”—let's call him John—“John on the line.”

I knew who he was immediately. He was an officer who suffered with PTSD, and he said he's going to kill himself. He said that he has had enough. He's waited long enough for action from the government. He can't get WSIB to listen. Nobody's listening. He's lost his wife; he's lost his family; he's lost his job; and he's about to lose his house. There's no point in going on.

I don't know how many of us in this assembly have received calls of potential suicides in their offices. I can tell you, as a United Church minister, I used to get them, but this was the first time in my 10 years here that I received something like that.

So what did I do, Mr. Speaker? Here's the irony: I phoned 911. I phoned 911 to get first responders to respond to the call of a first responder who was about to take his own life. I can tell you, I'll bet there was some rivalry between police, paramedics and fire about who would get there first. I'm not going to weigh in on that one. I'm not going to weigh in on the role the dispatchers played either—because I know they did, behind the scenes.

He was saved because of the actions of those who run into danger when we run out. But this was for one of their own. How sad must that day be? Potentially, how traumatic must that moment be when you are called in to a call for someone you may have worked with at some point and you've seen what their life has become because of this disorder? Here you are, having to save them. And think of what he went through to make the call, because his training was all about helping others, not asking for help himself—certainly not like that.

The last thing a first responder would ever want to do would be to make that call. In fact, he said specifically,

“Do not call 911.” Specifically, he said, “There is no help for me. Do not call them.” Quite frankly, you can get the psychology here. You can understand why he would say that: because he was the one who used to make those calls. He didn’t want to put his fellow officers or anybody else through that call. He didn’t want to be that person. But he was that person, and the only legal, reasonable thing to do, for us, was to make the call.

So this is the conundrum, and hopefully—need I say it again?—after almost eight years from the time that Shannon Bertrand walked into my constituency office, the first tabling, the second tabling, the third tabling, the fourth tabling, the fifth tabling, when, joyously, it passed second reading and these seats were filled with first responders, to last Thursday—there wasn’t a dry eye in that room when we finally heard from the labour minister and finally heard from the House leader what we had been working for for those many years: that finally a very simple act would take place, an act that I can tell you will save lives, and that is simply to declare that post-traumatic stress disorder is a workplace injury.

For all the prevention in the world—and there should be—and for all the programs that employers should bring in—and they should bring them in—and for all the new science about how our brains work and our bodies work and what happens, I’m telling you, just like in the military, our first responders still have to be protected from this, because there will be that person who comes down with PTSD no matter what we do, because of the nature of what we ask them to do. Heroes for sure; humans for sure. I like to think of that Achilles image: immortal but for the heel; immortal but for the fact that—guess what—he was human too.

So to all the first responders out there—particularly I’d like to dedicate this afternoon, really, and all of this debate to the families of those who didn’t win the battle with post-traumatic stress disorder. To all of those families who lost someone in the line of duty to this dreaded disease—and it is a disease—I say that finally, finally, we’re getting action. This is a glorious day. Revel in it, rejoice, and know that that death was not in vain, as no first responder’s death is. We thank them, and we thank you for all that you do for us. Finally, we’re doing something for you.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. David Zimmer: I’m glad that I have an opportunity to respond for a couple of minutes. First let me compliment the member for Parkdale–High Park for her one-hour speech and actually getting through that one-hour speech. It was packed with graphic and practical and realistic detail.

I’ve heard much about post-traumatic stress disorder, but I’ve always heard about it in a theoretical sense, from a distance, from something that I read in the paper that occurred to someone else. I have never been as moved as I have been by your personal stories and the stories of other Ontarians that you’ve related so graphically. I think

when we—all the members of this chamber, be they Conservative, NDP or Liberal—heard that speech, it reinforced the need for this legislation, the purpose of this legislation, and in its own way serves as a tribute and as a mark of respect for our first responders. It’s not surprising that this has deep and unanimous all-party support.

I had an experience many, many years ago with a suicide. That was one event when I was in my twenties, and it still bothers me from time to time. I cannot imagine what it must be like to be a first responder who has had a 20-, 25- or 30-year career and deals with that type of thing on a daily or weekly basis. The cumulative effect in mid-career or at the end of the career that that must have on the mind is something we should respect.

1630

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I also want to compliment the member from Parkdale–High Park for her passionate speech and her passionate advocacy for this bill on PTSD.

She told many stories of first responders. I have two sons who are first responders. One is a police officer and one is a captain of our local fire department. A number of years ago—in fact, it was in 2010—we lost two firefighters from a roof collapse. It happened on St. Patrick’s Day in Listowel.

You can imagine, when the rumours started floating around that there might have been somebody killed, his mother and I were quite frantic to see if he was at the fire. He was on duty, but he wasn’t in the building when it collapsed, thank goodness. But I certainly feel for the two firefighters who were lost that day, and their families.

I also know a friend of mine whose son came back from Afghanistan. He did one tour there and came back totally—I don’t know what the right term is, but he was in bad shape when he came back. He spent a lot of time with psychiatrists. The army did look after him. However, he still has issues with this disorder.

I think this bill, as our party has stated, must go through. It has been a long time coming. Hopefully, we can get it through committee with the appropriate amendments when it gets there, and we can get it through committee fast and it won’t die again on the order paper, because I think there are too many people who are depending on the quick and effective passage of this bill. Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Rarely have we an opportunity in this House to be transfixed and have the full attention of every member on an issue like this. I do want to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for her resiliency in returning each year for a number of years to introduce private member’s bills.

Each time we did learn more. I think of her comments on the 24-month period being not long enough, and

addressing the stigma that still exists around post-traumatic stress disorder.

She did mention the fact the legislation includes some part-time employees. I think that's really important; and her statement around correctional officers as well. I myself had the opportunity to tour two jails over the so-called break with our critic from Oshawa, and I have to say what I saw in those correctional facilities will stay with me a long time. I think that those are places of work where there is trauma each and every single day, because you're also dealing with inmates who have serious issues, both from sometimes a medical perspective but definitely a mental health perspective. So I was encouraged to see the mention of correctional officers in the legislation as well.

I want to leave with you the strongest point that I think the member made on this issue: It's that we will pay one way or another. We can address the issue of post-traumatic stress disorder for first responders with dignity and with grace and with compassion and with resources, or we can re-traumatize and dehumanize them going forward.

It is time for this legislation. Let's make it the strongest piece of legislation so we get it right first and foremost. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'd also like to echo the words of my colleagues and congratulate the member for Parkdale-High Park. I've known Cheri DiNovo for a number of years, long before I got elected to this chamber. She has been a passionate advocate on a number of issues. This is just one of those issues, and I congratulate her for her work on this issue.

I'd also like to congratulate our minister and our Premier for their wonderful work on this important bill.

Just a week or two ago I had the opportunity to attend the graduation ceremony at the police services academy for the city of Toronto, which is located in Etobicoke. I had a chance to witness the graduation of a number of young cadets who are now constables in the Toronto Police Service. The emcee of the event was talking about what a difficult job they have. "They have our backs," he said at one point; I think what this bill is about, this issue is about, is making sure that we have theirs. I think that making sure we recognize the trauma, making sure we recognize what they go through, the scars they take on as a result of their work—it's important that we not just pay tribute to it but that we act on it, and that's what I mean by having their back.

I'd love to share a quick anecdote in my remaining time. Every year I host something called the community recognition awards, where I give awards to people who are making a difference in our community. Last year, when I held these awards, I gave awards to people who are doing a range of things: volunteering at seniors' homes, volunteering with kids with special needs, donating money to important causes, you name it. I had awarded about 30 awards throughout the day, throughout

this presentation, throughout this ceremony. At the end, there was a gentleman who I wanted to recognize. His name is Anthony Colabufalo. He received the highest award for courage as a firefighter here at Queen's Park. I presented him. I told his story, how he and his colleagues ran into a burning building to rescue his colleagues. He received a standing ovation. I think, today—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. I'm sorry; I've got to cut you off.

To the member for Parkdale-High Park, you have two minutes for your response.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I think I've said just about everything, but to conclude, it's been a long journey: Eight years, five tablings, one second reading and finally we are here. Again, thanks to the organizations that have been there all the time; in particular, those who sat through all of the debate this afternoon, from the Ontario Provincial Police Association—that shows stamina—and also of course to these incredible organizations out there like Tema Conter Memorial Trust. I can't emphasize their work enough in this. They have really kept this issue alive across Canada, particularly here; they've been great supporters, as always. Also to all those other folk out there: to OPSEU, Unifor, CUPE, to those people who have kept this issue alive as well, and of course to the first responders—already, I've mentioned paramedics, firefighters, police, dispatchers, corrections officers. And don't worry, probation and parole officers and front-line nursing: We are still fighting for you and others. The fight goes on. But also to those individuals: to Shannon Bertrand, who first walked into my office—that took such incredible courage and still does; Bruce Kruger, for coming back again and again; for others, the families of Constable Garda, Norm Traversy. They all know who they are. There are many, many of them out there who constantly remind us, if not on a weekly basis, on a monthly basis, "What's happening with the bill? Where is it at? When are they going to act? Please keep the pressure up." Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that we have kept the pressure up, all of us.

Thank you again to those who rush in to us when we are running out of buildings. Thank you for those who come and do the work we don't want to do. Thank you. It's your time now. Celebrate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I'll be sharing my time today with the member for Sudbury.

It's again a privilege to rise in the House on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge, and I want to pay special tribute to those who are home today watching on TV: John and Gwendolyn. Bev, I know, is watching.

I was very proud to be present for the introduction of Bill 163 last week, which proposes a comprehensive approach, including both preventive and legislative measures, to our first responders in the Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act. I recognize that this is a very important legislative measure for many first responders across Ontario and including those that I've

worked closely with, those that live and work in Cambridge and Waterloo region.

1640

Due to my work as a critical-care nurse, I knew many paramedics, many of the firefighters, correctional officers as well as the firefighters. I'm very proud to add some of my comments today on today's debates.

I've had a lot of comments and a lot of inquiries in the last few months: "When's this legislation coming? When are you speaking to it?" There has been a lot of great interest in it. Listening to the comments throughout the House, I know that there's a lot of support on all sides of the House.

In looking back as a long-time nurse, there has been an awareness of PTSD, but without the name, for many, many years. It's only been recently that PTSD has had the awareness that it has. During the minister's comments earlier today, he referenced the term "shell shock." It took me back to a time when I had a teacher in high school—this is decades ago—and he had been in the war. I didn't, but some of my colleagues used to tease him because when we heard a plane coming overhead, he would find an excuse to go into the supply cupboard in the classroom to retrieve chalk or paper and that kind of stuff.

My high school was near Toronto airport and so, on a flight runway day, it might happen many times and it was very disruptive. Some of the kids teased him about that. I think back to that. We didn't have an awareness of what shell shock meant and the injuries that these individuals have. I'm sorry that that teacher had to endure that.

Over the decades, there's finally starting to be some momentum behind looking at mental illness, post-traumatic stress disorder, and trying to break down the stigma that still surrounds mental illness and those suffering from PTSD. One of the important things that we can do right now is to break that stigma for those who are suffering from this very real and serious illness. Our attitudes and our culture need to shift away from stigmatizing these individuals and make sure that they can get the care that they need.

In my role as a nurse, I used to encourage my patients who were suffering from mental illness to step forward and actually look after themselves, do what the doctor was suggesting and take their medication. Very often, they didn't want to do that, so I would try to present the example that if they had pneumonia and they needed medication, I as a nurse would try and encourage them to take it to get over that. The same thing happens with mental illness. Some resisted even so. Even as a caregiver, it took an effort to try and get those individuals to really care for themselves.

I'm very glad we're recognizing that PTSD is a significant risk to the health and well-being of those who are employed in certain high-risk occupations, who often witness and experience a lot of traumatic events. The fact is that evidence shows us that first responders are twice as likely to suffer from PTSD compared to the general population.

When I worked in the emergency room, when I first started there, my friends and family would often say, "How can you work in the emergency department? I couldn't face the blood and the injuries that you'd see there. I couldn't do it." Even then, my response was always about the first responders. I'd talk about the fact that trauma victims who are brought in by ambulance had had their initial first treatment provided. I know that the MPP from Eglinton–Lawrence addressed, in his remarks, some of the horror and the trauma that was out there in those situations, but we didn't quite see that in the emergency department. It was the first responders in situations who had to deal with patients and individuals who didn't make it to the hospitals, in a chaotic scene, very often with shocked bystanders or environmental hazards that sometimes endangered the crew, such as dark, cold, rain, sleet, emotionally and physically traumatized people and situations endangering their own physical health.

They see things in the calls that they rush to that they cannot find words to describe to the general community or their families. They often keep these things to themselves, increasing their risk of PTSD.

There can be an accumulative effect that increases the risk of developing PTSD symptoms. In this case, first responders sometimes can't even identify the one situation that caused the symptoms to begin. They often describe it as the straw that broke the camel's back.

The proposed legislation will create a presumption that PTSD that is diagnosed in first responders is a result of the worker's employment. This is huge for this population. I need to reiterate that evidence shows that first responders are twice as likely to suffer from PTSD compared to the general population, due to the risk of frequent exposure to traumatic stress.

This morning, when I was able to ask a question of the Minister of Labour in question period, I referenced a particular situation that happened in my emergency department a few years ago, where a child came in with first responders, who was vital signs absent from a car crash. Speaker, I had to look after his mother at another end of that emergency room, and it was a very traumatizing day.

The car crash happened because of snowy weather. After the first responders handed that child over for us to try and resuscitate—and sadly, the child didn't make it. While we were dealing with all the emotional trauma and the physical trauma of those victims in the emergency room, our first responders had to go back out to the other calls and look after other people who were having car crashes throughout the day.

At the end of our 12-hour shift that day, our manager had already addressed the idea that we needed a critical incident debriefing. I didn't even know what that meant at that time. What they did was they brought in a social worker and helped to look after us, the nurses who had been in that situation that day, and we were able to get that care. Yet our first responders were out still, saving other people's lives. These are the realities of why they have that accumulative stress out in the community.

I'm very proud of our government for bringing forward Bill 163. It's a comprehensive bill that deals with both prevention as well as legislative measures. I think it's very, very important that we look at the whole prevention piece of it as well. Preventing people from getting PTSD in the first place is really a key measure that we're addressing in this legislation.

It covers a wider range of first responders than perhaps one of the first bills in private members' bills that came forward. I think that is due in part because of the increased awareness and recognition, which we have here in the Legislature and society has in general, that these mental health injuries are just as serious—if not more serious, sometimes—than physical injuries.

Our bill is one element of a comprehensive strategy that also includes a radio and digital awareness campaign to help reduce the stigma attached to PTSD and to direct employers and workers to available resources.

It's requesting an annual leadership summit to monitor progress in dealing with PTSD and how we're doing, and also a free online tool kit with the resources on PTSD that's tailored to meet the needs of employers. It also looks at grants for research that help support the prevention of PTSD. Our proposed legislation also incents employers of first responders covered by the presumption to develop workplace prevention plans to help prevent it in the first place.

Speaker, the Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act, if passed, will provide a sense of security to Ontario's first responders. It will create a presumption that PTSD diagnosed in first responders is a result of the worker's employment, and this can't come a minute too soon. It also ensures that first responders will not have to go through the process of proving their PTSD, which we all know can lead to further stress and delay.

We, as a government, and all sides of the House want to make sure that those who need the help get it, and get it as soon as they can. Expedited adjudication or faster processing will enable faster access to compensation and proper treatment, ultimately supporting recovery outcomes.

In closing, I'm very, very proud to be part of a government that would introduce this piece of legislation as part of a comprehensive plan. I thank all members who have spoken to this important legislation today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now recognize the member for Sudbury.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: First off, I want to thank my colleague from Cambridge for her great presentation on this bill.

I'm very pleased to be able to rise and speak to Bill 163, the Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder). Mr. Speaker, this is a very important bill. It truly is a thorough piece of legislation that handles both how the government can support first responders who develop PTSD, as well as allows the Ministry of Labour to collect data, so that we can better understand PTSD and how we can prevent it.

1650

Speaker, this is a bill that I'm very proud to support. Whether they're police officers, firefighters, paramedics, 911 operators, correctional service workers or other first responders listed in this bill, first responders have an incredibly difficult job. They go from crisis to crisis, and we expect them to come in, fix the situation and then move on to the next one. Given that we ask them to come into people's lives at some of the worst possible moments and make them better as best they can, I think it's incumbent upon us as a society to provide them with support when they're faced with their worst and do what we can to help them out.

I'm proud our government is taking this step forward in providing first responders with the help they need if they develop PTSD on the job. By including PTSD under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, those who suffer from PTSD will be able to get the benefits they need to support themselves while getting the help they need.

As great as that is—and it is fantastic—I'm also very happy that this bill amends the Ministry of Labour Act to allow the ministry to collect and publish data on PTSD. As great as it is that this bill and previous similar bills have provided access to WSIB benefits to those who suffer from PTSD as a result of their time as a first responder, coping with PTSD is a significant challenge and recovery is often a very long ordeal.

The more people we can prevent from getting PTSD, the better. I'm very optimistic that with access to data, we'll be able to take future actions to limit the number of cases of people suffering from PTSD. That being said, though, being a first responder will remain a challenging job. That's why I'm also glad that this bill is just part of the wider strategy the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services are implementing together, which includes ads to increase awareness about PTSD, providing a tool kit to employers with resources on PTSD, and grants for research that supports the prevention of PTSD.

Our first responders—police, fire and paramedics—do a very difficult job, day in and day out. It has been a tradition since my time in political life to hold a barbecue every year to thank emergency service workers in our community and say thanks for their hard work. This barbecue, this opportunity for my community of Sudbury to come together and say thank you, stems from a personal experience.

Back in 2009, I lost my mother. She was 85 years old and had some health complications. The one thing that, unfortunately, many of us who have elderly parents experience is that you end up calling 911 often. The last time that we had to call 911 and bring my mother to the hospital, the service, the quality of care that she received from the paramedics, was astounding: their bedside manner, the way they were able to help my mother, bring her to the hospital and get her settled.

We, as the family, then get there, rush in and make sure that everything is okay with your loved one—that

time it was my mother. I wanted to run out and say thank you to the paramedics. It was about 15 or maybe 20 minutes after they had brought my mother in. By the time I got out there—as I said, 10, 15 or 20 minutes later—the paramedics were already gone. They were already gone doing another job.

That's when I thought to myself, and I know we've heard it many times throughout the debates this afternoon, that while we're running out, they're running in. While, yes, many will say that they're just doing their job, it is such a difficult thing. I thought that it would be great if we could do something as a community where we could come together and say thanks. So we've had this barbecue now in my community for seven years. We get anywhere between 800 and 1,000 people who come out every year and sign this great big banner that says, "Thank you." These police officers, paramedics and firefighters have these banners up in their stations, and they get to see every day a thank you from little Johnny and little Suzy and from adults, just saying thank you, and that thank you goes a long way.

At one of those barbecues, there wasn't a dry eye in the place. If you'll indulge me, Mr. Speaker, I'll also talk about this story a little bit. We had a young woman, maybe 14 or 15 years old, show up to the barbecue and she had a little bit of a limp. She came up and said hello to me, and told me her story. Back in the winter, she was involved in a very serious car accident. She didn't think she was going to make it, but she said the firefighters arrived on the scene very, very quickly, assessed the situation and made sure she was okay. The jaws of life had to be used. She was extracted from the vehicle. She was then put in an ambulance.

The paramedics were there and made sure they took care of her. The police were there making sure traffic was okay, and the police also helped escort the ambulance to get from the highway to the hospital so that this young woman could get to the hospital and receive the life-saving treatment that she needed. The coming together of all three of those services—we can also talk about the 911 dispatchers, but it was the firefighters, the paramedics and police in this instance.

When she came to the barbecue, I introduced her to some of the paramedics who were just nearby, and a paramedic said, "Oh, well, I remember that event. The individuals who were the ones who took you to the hospital are actually on duty today." So they called them, and the paramedics came over to say hello. The paramedics also said, "The firefighters who were out that day are going to be coming by in a little bit." The firefighters then knew who the police officers were on that scene, and they all came together. This young woman actually got to look at every single person who was involved in saving her life to say thank you.

As I said at the beginning of that story, there wasn't a dry eye anywhere at that barbecue, because she was telling these individuals what she was going to do with her life.

Applause.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Yes. And I think the important thing to recognize from all of this is that all of the emergency personnel, all of the first responders, almost seemed embarrassed from the thanks that they were getting from this young woman. They were saying, "We were just doing our job."

But it's these types of instances that they're doing each and every day that are changing the lives of all of our citizens. Making sure that we can come out today and say that when you've hit that point, if you hit a breaking point as one of those first responders doing great work in our community, we will be there for you. That's why I know that we are all happy to hear that we're all coming together to talk about this bill, to get this bill passed quickly, to make sure that we support our first responders. As we all say, they are the ones who are running in when we are running out, and we all applaud the work that they do every day and say thank you for that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It is a privilege to speak to this bill. Of course, we support the Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act completely in this party on this side of the House.

I listened to the members from Cambridge and Sudbury, and I would say to the member from Cambridge especially that, as a nurse, she has had the experience of seeing death and experiencing some terrible things. My wife is also a registered nurse, and my three daughters are registered nurses. I've had the experience of hearing them come home and tell me what happened at work, where they work in hospitals; not all days are good days, and not all days do people survive.

Some of the deaths are particularly tragic, and they can only have a terrible impact on a person. It takes very strong people to be able to continue to work in that environment.

1700

I have a world of respect for nurses, firemen, policemen, paramedics. Being the first responders, they see the very terrible, gory scenes that they are exposed to from time to time, and they suffer PTSD. As a society, it's good that we are talking here today and we have this bill, which I'm sure will pass, because nobody in this House would not support it. These people take care of us when we have shocking needs—accidents, suicides, things of that nature.

I did a statement earlier today about Bernard Cameron, who died tragically. I didn't expand upon that, and I think I will right at this moment. He was shot in the door of his house by his daughter's ex-boyfriend. We hear of these kinds of stories; usually it's far away. Bernard was a councillor in his community, an upstanding member of society. His daughter and the boyfriend broke up. The boyfriend's response—and he would have been in a state of mental illness, I'm sure—was to come to the door at 7 o'clock in the morning with a gun to shoot the daughter. He stepped bravely in front of his daughter and received the bullet, and he died. The second bullet hit the daughter in the arm. With the third bullet, the boy killed himself.

Now, you can imagine the impact on the family, of course, but imagine the first responders who would come and see bodies on the ground, a shattered family with no point or purpose. How would they go home and feel anything good about how they did that day? It was just a bad day for everybody involved, including first responders.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank all the speakers who have talked today about this situation, post-traumatic stress disorder. The member from Sudbury shared some of his personal issues, which was good to hear.

Every once in a while, Speaker, this Legislature gets things right. It takes time sometimes to get to where we all have to get to, but we did. It's happened on more than one occasion since I've been here for nine years, and it's a good time in the House when things like that happen.

In reference to post-traumatic stress, I myself have experienced it through my own family. My own family were World War II veterans. Most of them saw action. We were one of the lucky families. They all came back from World War II, some with a couple of wounds, but they came back.

My one uncle, particularly, was a pilot. He had been shot down a couple of times, one time as a gunner in what they called a Swordfish. It was an old type of plane that used to drop torpedoes; the Swordfish are the ones that got the Bismarck. His gunner was dead. His co-pilot was wounded. My uncle had two wounds, and he got the Distinguished Flying Cross for that one when he landed the plane with 80 holes in the fuselage. To get him to talk about that was a rare moment. After a couple of beers you might get something out of him, but he didn't like to talk about it. When he did talk about it, you'd see tears forming in his eyes.

My other uncle was in the Canadian Navy, and he was sunk a couple of times on North Atlantic convoy duty. He was on a frigate. He also had trouble talking about things. He was a stoker in the engine room, and chief at one point. He was the last guy up the ladder, and a lot of his fellow sailors didn't make it up the ladder when they were torpedoed. That was tough, and it has an effect on all the families as well. The people who survive after individuals face these types of traumatic situations; the family also suffer, because they don't know how to react to it.

This service that is put out to the people and the families is overdue for many, many decades, and I'm very excited that finally these people are going to get the help they need.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted to have this opportunity to give comment to members on this side of the House, the member from Cambridge and the member from Sudbury, on their very articulate discussion of arguments in favour of supporting Bill 163, Ontario's first responders' act.

I was particularly interested in the comments from a public health nurse because, as you know, this bill doesn't go to providing that kind of PTSD automatic support to nurses in the health care system who deal with trauma on a daily basis. In correctional services, of course, it does, but not in the public health system, and I know that the member from Cambridge many, many times experienced great trauma—great trauma.

It reminded me of a paper that I wrote in university where I went and interviewed nurses in a hospice in Toronto at Bloor and Church. It was a Salvation Army hospice. My focus was around On Death and Dying, the great treatise by Kübler-Ross, where she goes through the stages of death and dying, but I was interested in the way that public health nurses in a hospice were able to deal with the fact that their careers were about providing end-of-life care for people with whom they would develop very personal relationships over a period of time, sometimes short but sometimes many years, only to see these people falter, fail and ultimately die.

The consuming conclusion that came out was that, within that hospice sector, within that workplace, there was recognition of the stress and the concerns that the nurses would have. There was ongoing counselling and there was an expectation that they were going to be going through this kind of stress, and they were very clear about providing those kinds of emotional supports to nurses in that environment. I thought that was really important.

It makes me think that maybe part of the response, with our first responders, needs to be providing the support, providing the training and the emotional training prior to experiencing traumatic events so that they know to come forward to get the kinds of help that they need because that's part of the culture that needs to be changed in order to have a positive impact for first responders in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: As I alluded to in my earlier comments—a lot of the same refrain as the member from Cambridge and the member from Sudbury. I think we're all on the same page on this one. I think we came to the realization that first responders truly do need to have that timely service, and I think that's the key part of this.

As I said in my earlier comments, I believe we need to get to committee to do clause-by-clause. It's a way to ensure that everyone has their say. It's a way to make sure we do legislation that's going to be effective and we're going to actually listen to the first responders and ensure—they are the people at the front line. They are the people that are walking into those situations to see the trauma, and they best know what they believe, along with, obviously, the medical community.

I think one of the things I heard from some of the municipalities was just that assessment piece, of how they can be assured that that's going to be there. It needs to be assessed as quickly as possible so that it doesn't drag on and create even more problems down the road. I

think we all can respect and appreciate that with something like mental health across the spectrum, not just PTSD, the longer you leave it, the more ingrained it becomes and the more challenges that come out of that. It's challenging for the person, for their family and certainly for our systems, Mr. Speaker. Then you have the problems of even accessing those programs.

I'm pleased to see that this is on the table, that the government has brought it forward again. Ms. DiNovo from Parkdale-High Park, I believe it is, brought it forward. Frank Klees from our party, a number of years ago, brought it forward. It's good that it's here and that we're all going to be on the same page. We're going to debate it. We're going to ensure that it's well written and it's going to, most importantly, provide that timely response, service, support and programs for those people who, every day of their lives, are out—as Randy Pettapiece said with his two sons that are first responders, they're out seeing that. They're the people that are going to walk into these situations. I think they need to be assured that they have support when they need it, after those traumatic problems.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Cambridge can respond.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you, Speaker. I really want to thank all the members that have spoken in the last little while: the members from Sudbury, Carleton-Mississippi Mills, Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, Beaches-East York and Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

I'd have to say that all the stories that we've been hearing today can't help but really touch you, really get the message across of why Bill 163 is so important and really needs to pass quickly. It's heartening to hear support from all sides of the House.

Especially when I listened to the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, who talked about what it must have been like for those first responders to get to that front porch and see what they must have seen—those kinds of mental images never leave those first responders. They're the ones that we're trying to protect with this legislation and trying to get rid of the stigma that they've had to suffer from their own colleagues: "Tough it up; that's what you signed up for," or, "You don't need this kind of thing." But decreasing that stigma, so that those first responders who see some of those very, very traumatic circumstances can get care sooner.

1710

I referenced the incident that I dealt with in the emergency department; we had someone to talk to by the end of that shift. Those are the kinds of pieces that we want to see coming forward for all first responders, without the stigma or the issues that they've had amongst their own colleagues saying that they don't really need these pieces.

I'm very proud of this government and I think it's timely right now, as there's increased awareness from the general public about mental illness injuries and PTSD. So I'm very proud to stand today in support of Bill 163, Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 163. First off, I have to commend and applaud the government for introducing this bill, while at the same time recognizing the long-standing work by the member from the third party, the member for Parkdale-High Park, in her advocacy in championing presumptive legislation for people suffering from PTSD.

Debate is important on all bills. Debate allows us to look at the bill, ensure that it's the best bill possible and offer up our comments and our questions so that we not only can make the bill better, but also that we can understand it better, comprehend it and ensure that there's clarification on what the bill will do and how it will do it, and if we can make it better in any possible way.

I think it is important just to understand that the other really important part of this legislation that may not be seen by many is just the awareness and the understanding that will be generated and created, a better understanding for many people in the public of just what PTSD is. Because PTSD is not one disease or one illness; it has a very broad spectrum of how it impacts people.

As we've heard today—and I'm sure there's nobody in this House who doesn't know somebody directly who has suffered or is suffering from some form of PTSD to some degree, whether it's a debilitating PTSD that prevents that person from getting out of their house and going to work, or whether it's a more minor form. It comes in a great many shapes and sizes.

That was very clear to me back in January of this year—it goes back a little bit before that. In October of last year I started working with a physician in my riding. Her name is Dr. Manuela Joannou and she owns a facility in Perth called Tay River Reflections. She is attempting and trying to bring forward—and I have no doubt she will to bring forward—a new PTSD treatment here in Canada called SPARTA.

SPARTA is an acronym for suicide prevention and resilience training anonymous. We had a very well-attended SPARTA conference in Perth in January. It was attended and participated in by many people from our military who are suffering PTSD, but also paramedics and police officers, former police officers of the Ottawa police and the OPP, many who are suffering from PTSD and who have been suffering for a long time.

I think that's one of the things that I'd like to bring to the government's attention when I read this bill. They have gone out of their way—they've used the word "comprehensive." They want this to be a comprehensive approach, a comprehensive bill for people who are suffering from PTSD. I think, in large part, they've done a very, very good job. But I do see that they've got prevention included in the bill, they've got the presumptive elements in the bill, but it doesn't talk much about treatments, and from my engagement with people suffering from PTSD, that's where I see a significant failing: our treatments. Our treatments at the present time are very expensive. The success rate is less than stellar, I

think by any measure, and I think we need to do more to understand and improve our treatments for people suffering from PTSD.

As the member from Parkdale–High Park mentioned in her comments, since January of this year we've already had 10 first responders commit suicide in Ontario. I can't remember if it was in Ontario or in Canada. She also mentioned that last year there were 30 first responders who committed suicide. These are staggering numbers, Speaker. I believe it's slightly over 50 combat vets in the Canadian military who saw service in Afghanistan who have committed suicide. That is a very tragic and unfortunate part about PTSD, the level of suicide that is a result of that debilitating disorder. That's one of the reasons why I was so engaged and wanted to be engaged with the SPARTA program.

Statistics in Canada are not quite as easy to come across as stats in the States, but typically the median time frame for PTSD treatment is about three years. That's median. The treatments generally range up to about \$10,000 each. In the States, they've estimated that the cost for PTSD is \$42.3 billion a year—staggering amounts of money, and staggering tragedy and loss of life with PTSD.

So it's very significant that we're moving forward, that this Legislature is recognizing that something needs to be done and is moving in the right direction.

I read through the bill and, listening to the member from Parkdale in her comments, I have some questions that I hope can be addressed during the debate or by correspondence from the minister or the parliamentary assistant, if they're listening. The first one is, in the bill it recognizes and defines PTSD using the DSM-5 criteria. However, there is a section in the bill that, for pending cases or cases that are under appeal with the WSIB—and this is in section 15 under the heading "Transition, prior diagnosis." It says, "For the purposes of pending claims and appeals, and of new claims made under this section within six months after the day section 2 ... comes into force, posttraumatic stress disorder includes posttraumatic stress disorder, as described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition," so that's DSM-IV.

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I would like to get some clarification on how that is going to work, that for pending claims the DSM-IV will be used, but for future claims DSM-5 will be used. I'm not—and I don't think there are many people in here who are clinical psychiatrists and understand all the nuances of DSM-IV and DSM-5, but I know there are differences. I would like to know what that nuance is there for in the bill.

I also have a question that I would like to see, again, either the minister or the parliamentary assistant address, and that is under the volunteer firefighter section of this bill. This bill covers full-time, part-time and volunteer firefighters, among others. As we know, in my riding I only have one municipality that has a full-time firefighter force. All other municipalities have volunteer fire-

fighters. So all of them have other jobs; all those volunteer firefighters have other jobs. They could be an electrician, could be a plumber, could be whatever. I don't understand, and it's not clear within the legislation that's proposed, how this works.

If, for example, I'm an electrician and I also am a volunteer firefighter, and I am suffering from PTSD as a result of my volunteer firefighter's activities, what claim does that person get? Do we know? A volunteer firefighter gets an honorarium of \$1,500 or \$2,000 a year. If his WSIB claim is based on the volunteer honorarium, it is not going to be of much use. If it's based on their employment income, how does that work? Is the municipality then going to pay those WSIB claims on income derived from another trade or occupation? I don't know, but it is a question that I would like to understand, how the government is proposing that that mechanism work. I'm hopeful. I'm sure it's not basing it on the very small honorarium that volunteer firefighters receive.

That's one thing. Also—and again, I'll go back to the member from Parkdale–High Park, because she had an exhaustive commentary on the legislation. She mentioned that it ought to be longer than two years, or 24 months, if somebody has had their claim denied—the word she used—so that they can appeal. But, in my reading of the legislation, if you have a pending claim or a claim that's under appeal, it can last for up to two years. But if you have a present claim that has been denied, this legislation will not help you.

Ms. Cindy Forster: That's correct.

Mr. Randy Hillier: So it's not presumptive in any fashion for those who have had their claims denied, for which, under this bill, they would be approved. So there are some contradictions within the language of the bill and how it purports to assist this transition or these people who are suffering from PTSD and who have claims in process right now or whether those claims have been denied. There are a couple of questions that I would hope and expect that somebody from the government side will take a look at, examine and, throughout debate, report back on what their views are on that.

I want to wrap up and go back to what I think is the most important element of PTSD, and that is finding effective treatments. We can see that the government wants to be a leader in the legislative field on PTSD. The government wants to be a leader in the prevention of PTSD. I would also ask the government to become a leader in the treatment of PTSD. That would make this bill really comprehensive. For somebody who is suffering from PTSD, having a disability income is not a solution. It's not a cure. It helps; it minimizes the suffering of not being able to work; but it doesn't cure the problems. It doesn't solve the problem. That's really what I think we need to look at with acuity, with sharpness: What else can we do to treat people suffering from PTSD and have them back, fully engaged, sociable, productive, and living life to the fullest?

I'll tell you, when I was at the SPARTA conference, I spoke with an Ottawa police officer who has not worked

since 1987, when he shot an unarmed individual. He thought the individual was armed; he thought the individual posed a significant danger. He hasn't worked since. A disability income is not enough—not in my books.

I'm going to say that we need to explore and understand PTSD in far greater depths and understanding.

I can tell you that one day, I was on the train coming back from Toronto. My son, who had just returned from Kurdistan and who had also seen action in Afghanistan—he and I were in the train, sitting together, and we started talking. We were in one of those four-seater compartments on the VIA train. The person across from us in that compartment started talking, and it ended up that he was a Canadian citizen who served in the second Iraq war. They started talking about combat and talking about how they dealt with combat and their return. As those two were discussing, the person across the aisle from us came over and started talking as well. It ended up that he was another Canadian citizen, and he served in the first Iraq war with the US Marines. So here it was: three Canadians who didn't know each other, who had all served in the military overseas, and volunteered and saw combat.

I'll tell you, it was the most enlightening three-and-a-half-hour train ride I've ever experienced, listening to these young men talk about their experiences, and talk about the very significant substance abuse that all of them had experienced in dealing with what they saw and did in combat.

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But the important part of that train ride was seeing the therapeutic element of these young men chatting with one another, and seeing how their shared experiences and their discussions were actually a powerful, powerful therapy and benefit to them.

I think that we can do much, much more on PTSD treatment. I'm going to continue to work with people like the Tay River spa to bring the SPARTA program—Suicide Prevention and Resilience Training Anonymous—here to Canada. It's been very successful in the States and, from what I understand, nobody who has taken the SPARTA program has committed suicide. That may sound like a terrible measure, but we see: Often, the tragic result of PTSD is suicide. If we can stop it, that's all the better.

Hon. Michael Coteau: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to recognize the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It is my pleasure to welcome some of the most outstanding young women in Ontario, Girls on the Rise, joining us here at the Legislature today. Please give them a big round of applause.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We are very pleased to welcome you to the Ontario Legislature today.

Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This is a very profound bill because PTSD is something that workers on the front lines, first responders, have been fighting really hard to

make this government acknowledge is a workplace injury, and that it's life-changing when someone experiences post-traumatic stress disorder. It's something that you can't just get over yourself. You're going to need some help. You may need that time off work. I'm extremely happy to see that, finally, this government has paid attention to the call for this bill and the work that the member from Parkdale–High Park has been doing around this issue.

The member from the Conservative Party talked about effective treatment. That is really important because there are things that people need. I was reading about this on the Internet, what treatment looks like. It's counselling; it's medication; it's support groups. The one thing, though, that people maybe are forgetting is that post-traumatic stress disorder also affects the family of that person who's experiencing that illness, and they need support as well. It's an injury that goes far beyond just the individual. Your family and friends feel the side effects of what you're experiencing.

It's about mental health, and I always want to take the opportunity to talk about mental health when I can in this House because it's extremely important. We need to do better under the mental health portfolio in the Ministry of Health and make sure that when people have post-traumatic stress disorder, mental health services are working for the patients. That needs to be fixed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: It gives me, actually, great pleasure to rise today and bring my voice to this debate for many reasons.

I was a social worker for many years before entering other aspects of my career. When I'm seeing this wonderful bill coming to this Legislature, it's a reassurance and also a reaffirming for me that we're going to be looking after people who are really being impacted by situations that are beyond their control and affect them.

One thing I wanted to say, though, just for the member opposite, in terms of—there was some reference to who will benefit from this bill, and there was a comment regarding volunteer firefighters. I took the bill; I just wanted to make sure we are covering them. Actually, it does: "the following workers." So volunteer firefighters will be beneficiaries as part of this wonderful bill.

Actually, when I think about it, I do believe, according to the numbers that I've read, that we're looking to have an impact on over 73,000 people in our province who will benefit from this bill coming forward, if it's passed. Certainly for me, it is an important piece of legislation. I want to just make sure that the member opposite had the same opportunity to see on page 4 that we're actually covering 12 first responder career opportunities.

When I think about the opportunity and the mental health that we heard in this House, having the right to be diagnosed and the acknowledgment that you have PTSD—I think it's also a very good support system for that person who is going to see their doctor in seeking treatment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I wanted to follow up on the comments of the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington on the issue of post-traumatic stress in the military.

He made mention specifically of Afghanistan. I have a book; it's titled 911. Many of us received a copy of this. It was written by Vali Stone. She tells a story here specifically with respect to military medics.

A fellow named Corporal Shaun Kaye, a military medical technician, talks about an incident in Kandahar. Kandahar is a hellhole at the best of times. I say that because I spent time in Kandahar, but it was not nearly as hot as when your son was in that part of the world or when Corporal Kaye was there. As a military medic, an armoured vehicle exploded; they don't really explain why. The commander who was on the route was severely injured. There were all kinds of problems getting him down, trying to get other vehicles to run. Another vehicle caught on fire.

It's just that it paints a picture. I won't get into the details of the horrendous things one would see in the field.

They did get him back. I'll just quote in part. This is a little bit later. The corporal himself who saved this fellow was taken to another treatment bay and treated. All he could think about was how he could have done things differently. It played over and over again in his mind. As he said, "It was so traumatic, I was intimidated when I had to get back into another Bison." That's an armoured vehicle.

It just lets you know that the casualties go beyond those who are rescued.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington for raising some questions about this legislation. It would be a shame, really, for it to take so long to get to this place, where we all agree it needs to be, and be missing some components.

While the voluntary firefighters are in here, there is no mention of nurses in this piece of legislation. Nurses, of course, are those front-line workers in the emergency rooms, hospitals and communities, and their voices have not been reflected in this legislation. There's room for improvement, and I hope that that listening continues as we move through.

There are nurses listed under correctional facilities, which I was actually quite happy to see. As I mentioned in a previous two minutes, I did a tour of the Vanier correctional facility just past Milton. I've often wondered what it's like there, and I don't have to wonder anymore. It's not a positive place, Mr. Speaker. In fact, what those nurses see in that place are extreme mental health issues. They see extreme self-harm, mutilation, people struggling with addiction issues.

All of those people in that place, 60% of them, are in remand. You may go into that place an innocent person,

waiting for a court date, but I can tell you that not too many people come out as an innocent person.

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It was particularly heartbreaking to see women who are so segregated, in isolation for 23 of 24 hours. It's unnatural for us to be in that state. The impact of those conditions for the inmates is on the working conditions of those correctional officers and nurses in those facilities, and it takes a toll on them. They told me. This is not a positive place. It can be so much better; it should be so much better. The help that these workers need, I'm happy to see, is reflected in this legislation.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington for his reply.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thanks to all the members who responded.

I do want to just take a moment for the member from Ottawa–Orléans. It's not that I was wondering if volunteer firefighters are covered. I read the legislation, and that is clear. My question was, how was their WSIB claim going to be handled with different employers? It will take far more than two minutes for me to explain to the member from Ottawa–Orléans how the WSIB program works. But I do say that it would be beneficial if you take a look and find out how volunteer firefighters will be covered under this legislation. Who is going to pay? How is it going to happen?

I wanted to wrap up just on one more thought about PTSD. We often look at PTSD as a mental disorder. It shows up in DSM-IV and DSM-5, and is seen as a mental disorder. There's therapy; there are medications; there are different treatment regimens for people with PTSD.

But I think what is important, and what I learned in my discussions, in my conversations, is that PTSD is also a moral injury for many people who suffer from it. They have seen or been party to or witnessed something that has caused a grave moral injury to themselves. It is an injury of the soul and the conscience, and a motive in that injury as much or more so, for many, than a mental disorder.

I think it is important that everybody in this House gains a greater understanding of PTSD as we move forward and help people who are suffering from PTSD.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's always an honour to rise in the Legislature to speak to important bills and, today, to speak to Bill 163.

I want to start out by thanking the member from Parkdale–High Park. She got a lot of kudos today for her tireless effort in tabling this bill five times in this Legislature, the last time being July 2014. It took eight long years for the government to seize this important bill and bring it forward as a government bill.

In the last bill that the member from Parkdale–High Park tabled, she was looking to have covered at that point

in time, under this presumptive legislation, emergency response workers, firefighters, paramedics and police officers. I believe she limited it to those very clear first responders because it was a private member's bill, and she was trying to make some inroads into trying to get the government to buy into a piece of legislation.

As some of the members have spoken to today, I want to spend my time zoning in on who is not covered. I want to thank the government for bring forward that piece of legislation, but we know that there are many more people that should be covered.

I want to briefly read a letter from the Ontario Nurses' Association's president that went to the minister on February 3, talking about their disappointment with excluding front-line registered nurses and other health care workers from your new strategy on PTSD, ignoring the growing experience of nurses with extremely violent incidents in their workplace. We talked about this a few months ago: 700 reports of violence by nurses in the health care sector over the last few years, and I think only 24 or 30 actual charges being laid out of those 700 violent incidents. So this is ever-growing, a 7% increase in violence just last year.

ONA went on to say that in previous submissions to the Liberal government, particularly on violence against women and the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment, ONA asked why legislation similar to other provinces is not being considered in Ontario for female-dominated occupations in health care, rather than solely just for first responders. Again, we ask why the government is excluding nurses, given that health care occupations are a leader in accepted physical claims for violence-related injuries under the current WSIB legislation. In a culture of acceptance, the incidents of violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, will not end soon.

I can tell you a little story at this juncture. I was at a retiree nurses' function back when Bill Cosby and Jian Ghomeshi were actually both charged over a couple of weeks with Criminal Code sexual violations. The talk at the table—there were about 140 or 150 retired nurses at this event, and it was the talk of the luncheon. They said, as nurses, each and every one of them had experienced in their workplace—and these were mostly hospital nurses—sexual harassment in some form, some once, some multiple times over the years. These were retired nurses, ranging in age from 55 to 90, at this event. They all were telling stories about their harassment in the workplace.

It's amazing to me that in a female-dominated workplace—we are not including nurses on this issue of post-traumatic stress disorder.

I want to thank the first responders, of course: our police, our firefighters, our paramedics, our correctional officers and our health care workers. I want to thank all of those people for the work that they do each and every day. As many of you know, I was a nurse for many years and I actually represented nurses probably for 20 years before being elected here to the Legislature. So I've got a

lot of experience and a lot of stories to talk to you about today with respect to that.

I also had an opportunity to reach out to our firefighters in Port Colborne. They shared with me the importance of this piece of legislation and how things have changed over the years. Ten years ago, they said that there could be a traumatic incident that a firefighter experienced and they would hold a meeting for all the firefighters and maybe one or two firefighters would show up. But because of discussion about PTSD with bills such as the member from Parkdale-High Park's, now when they have a traumatic incident, they might have 50% of the fire department actually show up and participate in that discussion.

PTSD isn't always just one incident. In fact, it can be very insidious. There can be traumatic events that happen on a daily basis or regularly in a workplace. For some, it may take a number of years for it to show itself. Having represented nurses and having done LTD appeals and WSIB appeals for nurses in the workplace, I can tell you—and two came to mind when I knew I was going to be talking about this. These weren't necessarily workplace incidents, but they were incidents from their childhood. Nurses present with alcohol and substance abuse problems, for example. When they finally get the treatment that is required, often they have dual or triple diagnoses. They suffer from chronic depression related to some traumatic incident in their childhood or in their teenage years. Just like a workplace traumatic event, that may not just be one event; it may be a series of events over the years that cause PTSD.

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Some stories that I'm going to tell you about briefly would be—imagine, as a front-line nurse, you are working in the intensive care unit and there is a code: somebody has a cardiac arrest in the emergency department. In that particular hospital, a nurse from the intensive care unit goes to emergency to assist with the resuscitation. Imagine you're the person actually administering that CPR, whether it be the respirations or the compressions. At the end of that process, that person does not survive, and you find out that it's your father or your father-in-law you were working on and you didn't know it—and the guilt that you experience from that one incident because you weren't able to save your family member's life.

That happens a lot in small communities. You might not see it as much in big communities like Toronto, where you have a lot of people who don't necessarily live in Toronto, but in smaller communities you know a lot of the people you're looking after in hospitals. Just an incident like that can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder.

There have been numerous incidents across the province in mental health units where nurses have been taken hostage. At our own greater Niagara site of the Niagara Health System, 20 years ago or so, a violent patient was out of control, with the nurses barricaded in the nurses' station and the door locked to the unit. I know that at least two of those nurses never came back to work.

They came back and tried to get back to work, but the situation was so bad that they weren't able to return.

We have situations like the Lori Dupont case, which I'm sure you discussed here a few years ago, where a registered nurse was murdered by a physician she had been dating, and broke off that relationship. The nurse who witnessed that murder suffered PTSD, and she was denied benefits by WSIB. Imagine witnessing one of your colleagues being murdered and not being able to get benefits from WSIB for that.

There are many issues that happen. There was one recent case that ONA won: a nurse who was harassed by a physician, female to female, for years. The employer refused to intervene. The nurse suffered PTSD. WSIAT struck down the legislative restrictions on benefits for mental stress as unconstitutional. But in light of this, we wonder how day-to-day circumstances of nurses continue to be ignored and why they're actually excluded—and not only registered nurses: registered practical nurses, personal support workers, and mental health workers who are out in the community and going out by themselves to a home where there may well be a violent patient, a patient who hasn't been taking their meds, hasn't been compliant. So I really can't understand why the government isn't including some of these.

Probation and parole: We had the situation in Renfrew, I believe, where three women were murdered last year. Imagine how the probation officer or the parole officer who had responsibility for that person who was released from prison—to find out that he had murdered three women. If that doesn't lead to post-traumatic stress for someone, I don't know what will. But the government didn't see fit to include probation and parole officers, who are part of the corrections system, in this bill.

You can go on—children's aid workers who, every day, deal with battered children, day in and day out. I think the government should have a look and move to the model that Manitoba is using, which basically would give every worker the right to a PTSD claim through WSIB.

Ms. DiNovo, the member from Parkdale–High Park, talked about the cost. There are going to be costs regardless of whether people are approved by WSIB. If they're not approved by WSIB and they have an LTD plan in their workplace, then they're going to go to LTD to get that, and then we're going to see the premiums go up for employers—most of whom are government employers, in this case. So the cost will either be borne by WSIB or they'll be borne by an increase in LTD costs.

The costs of not doing anything are those health care costs. I think the member from London–Fanshawe spoke about those extended costs. The costs are not just to the person who has suffered that traumatic illness or injury; the costs are also to his family, his children and his friends, who may have to seek medical treatment as well. So those costs can actually increase.

A number of reports showed that the five stressors that lead to PTSD are: the death of a child, particularly due to abuse; violence at work; treating patients who resemble family or friends; the death of a patient or injury to a patient after undertaking extraordinary efforts to save a

life; and heavy patient loads. Those are all part of a study, but the government has failed to even consider that nurses should be part of this bill.

A report out of BC showed that firefighters, doctors and nurses have the highest incidence of PTSD of any other occupation—another reason why we should look at it.

The other piece that is problematic is that employers don't know how to deal with victims of PTSD. They often try to bring them back to work too soon. They don't generally provide any supports in the workplace. I've represented nurses over the years who actually quit their jobs at the end of the day because they didn't get any support.

There was one case in particular where a nurse was trying to save a patient who was jumping out the window of a mental health unit. The patient died in that situation. She was very traumatized. She wasn't given support. In fact, she was harassed because she wasn't functioning well on her unit after the incident. The employer was trying to make a case to actually terminate her employment. Eventually, we were able to get her a settlement. She resigned and she went off to a better workplace, where she felt she had some support.

I can tell you myself, as a nurse back in the mid-1980s, I was working in the Port Colborne hospital on a surgical unit on the night shift when there was a fire in the city of Port Colborne. Seven people died in that fire. The emergency department was locked that night, so people had to ring a bell to get access to it. Having to go down to the emergency department and see three little children's and four adults' bodies lined up on gurneys, waiting for the medical examiner to come and do the pronouncement, and then having to get those bodies ready to take to the morgue for the funeral home to pick them up the next day—if that isn't a traumatic incident, I don't know what is. Once again, that's the reason for wanting to include health care workers in this situation.

The University Health Network incidents of assault report in 2014: a nurse punched in the face by a patient; another kicked in the breast; patients sending racial slurs; throwing urine at nurses; a sexual assault; and spitting in the nurses' faces.

McMaster general hospital: A woman who tried to save a patient's life developed PTSD and was forced to quit. And the list, unfortunately, goes on and on.

At the University Health Network, which includes Toronto General Hospital and Toronto Western Hospital, there has been a consistent increase in reports of assaults in the past three years. The number of violent incidents doubled in two years, jumping from 166 to 331, year over year, and 11 workers who were injured were unable to return to work for their shift following the assault. Thirty-four per cent of nurses surveyed report being physically assaulted by a patient in the previous year, and 47% reported experiencing emotional abuse. Seventy per cent of nurses who work in mental health have reported experiencing physical or emotional abuse. And yet this sector is completely left out of the PTSD legislation, though there is ample evidence showing that they are just

as likely, if not more likely, to actually experience a trauma in the workplace.

There is a need for some amendments, for sure, and the member from Parkdale–High Park addressed some of those today.

There is the issue about auxiliary police officers: Full-time police officers are included but auxiliary police are not included, and they should be.

The retroactivity piece, as I talked about—that needs to be extended, because two years just isn't long enough. Some people don't develop PTSD for many years, as I said. Sometimes it's an accumulation of many small incidents that actually lead to their having this illness, and so that needs to be addressed in the legislation.

The inclusion of special constables: Although the legislation speaks to First Nation constables, it does not include special constables that are in the system.

They did clarify that part-time paramedics are included, and that's good because many of our paramedics work two and three jobs to try and piece together a full-time one.

We need to look at including probation and parole officers under corrections in the bill, and we also need to define dispatchers versus communications officers. Because it's a two-way communication: It's those people taking the calls, but it's also those people dealing with the—the dispatcher is actually putting the calls out. So we want to make sure that that's clarified so that all of those dispatchers are actually covered by the legislation.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton–Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉES PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Jim McDonell, Eleanor McMahon
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Robert Bailey, Vic Dhillon
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Cristina Martins, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jack MacLaren
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Steve Clark
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Jennifer K. French
Monte Kwinter, Amrit Mangat
Kathryn McGarry, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Norm Miller
Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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